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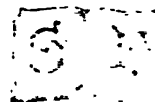


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VIOLET'S FALL.—PAGE 2.

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OUR WHITE VIOLET.

BY KAY SPEN,

AUTHOR OF 'GERTY AND MAY,' 'GRANNY'S STORY-BOX,'
ETC. ETC.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. L. WALES.



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OUR WHITE VIOLET.

CHAPTER I.

OUR WHITE VIOLET.

OUR White Violet was one of the dearest of little girls. She was loved by every one around her.

She was not pretty ; some little children seem to think that that has a great deal to do with being loved. But no, our White Violet was not a pretty child ; she was very pale, and had a plain face, which was grave, and almost sad-looking, except when it was lighted up by her sweet smile.

She was not clever either ; some little children think a great deal of that too, of being forward in their lessons, and being quick to answer, and of saying sharp, funny things. Violet had none of this ; she was rather backward for her age, quiet and

shy,—I daresay some of you clever young folks might even have called her stupid. But she wasn't that. She was not full of life and spirits either, as most children are ; she did not run and spring, and scream out with joy and laughter at new sights, or chase butterflies, or roll in the hay, or join in her brothers' and sisters' games of fun. Violet could do none of these things. She was deformed.

Poor Edmund ! he will never forget the day when, in the kindness of his kind heart, he caught up his little pet sister, his bright bonny-faced Violet, in the hall, where she stood crying because she could not get down the stone steps to the others, who were playing on the terrace. Nurse was getting out the perambulator for her, the darling ; for the two-year-old Violet could not go far yet on her ten little toes. Edmund saw her in her distress, pointing to the merry ones at play below, and crying, 'Me too ! Me too !' She stretched out her arms to him when she saw him.

'Come along, Baby Bud !' he cried, and snatched her up, calling out to nurse, as he ran off, 'I'll look after her !' But as he uttered the word he missed the first step, and fell ; Violet springing out of his arms to the very bottom of the flight of steps, where she lay on her back, quite still, while Edmund's scream brought nurse and all the children to the spot instantly. Edmund's bleeding face, bruised and cut, frightened the children more at the first moment

than that of the pale silent babe ; but when they saw that she lay in nurse's arms without moving or opening her eyes, a dreadful fear fell upon them, as they stood round the step on which nurse sat, almost holding their breath, and not daring to speak.

At last Alice whispered to Jessie—' Is she *dead* ? '

All heard the question, but no one answered. Nurse's tears began to fall. ' My lamb ! my pretty one ! ' she cried. ' Speak, my darling ! Look at your nursey ! Oh my dear little life, what shall I do for you ? '

' How dreadful ! ' exclaimed Mildred. ' I can't bear it ! Oh our sweet Baby Bud ! ' for so they always called the little Violet.

' What will mamma say when she comes home ? ' said Mary.

' Oh, our sweet Baby Bud ! ' cried the little sisters together, in a concert of weeping.

' Edmund, you naughty boy, you've killed her ! ' exclaimed Jessie.

' Hush, hush ! ' said nurse, looking up for the first time at Edmund, who lay sobbing violently on the stone landing at the top of the steps, where he had crawled after his fall.

' Make yourselves of use, dears ! Miss Mary, go and call Ellen ; tell her to bring some warm water and bathe poor Master Edmund's face. And you, Miss Milly dear, run and tell William to fetch Mr. Cowan to this poor darling, and not to lose a moment

—say there's been an accident. Oh, my dear baby! Poor mistress!' And nurse's tears fell fast again, as she looked at the little still form on her lap, so changed in a few minutes, from a bright, rosy, laughing child, to the likeness of death.

Off sped the twins, Mary and Mildred, on their errands.

'What can *I* do?' asked Jessie, in a vexed tone.

'Fetch Susan here to me, dear,' said nurse kindly.

Meanwhile little Alice had crept up the terrace steps, and notwithstanding her horror at the sight of the blood, had knelt down by her brother, as he lay with his face hidden in his hands, and put her small arm tenderly round his neck, laying her head by his.

'Don't cry, dear Eddy,' she said coaxingly; 'don't cry, darling.'

Edmund's only answer was his sobs.

'Here's my *handschif* for you,' said Alice; 'so wipe your poor face, Eddy dear—please don't cry!' and she patted and loved him, while her own little tender tears dropped over him.

'Here's Ellen come to bathe your face—I'm so glad! Oh the poor blood! Don't hurt him, Ellen, will you?'

Kate, the cook, came behind Ellen to see if she could do anything. They bathed Edmund's cuts and bruises, and helped him indoors to lie on his bed, for he had injured his arm in trying to save Violet

as she fell, and it gave him great pain. Alice crept up with them, and sat on the bed by Edmund, trying in her dear little way to pet and comfort him, until, wearied out with crying, he fell into a sound sleep, from which he was only awakened by the doctor, who stood over him with a troubled face. Alice was still keeping watch by her brother.

‘Where are you hurt, my boy?’ asked Mr. Cowan.

Edmund could only think of one thing. He hardly dared ask, ‘How is she?’

‘Alive, but badly hurt, I fear,’ was the answer.

Edmund burst into tears.

‘I was afraid she was dead,’ he said. ‘I would have suffered anything to save her!’

‘I know you would,’ said the doctor kindly. ‘Poor boy! you could not help it. Don’t fret any more about it.’

‘Where is she hurt?’ asked Edmund.

‘Her spine,’ replied the doctor gravely.

‘Oh my poor poor Baby Bud!’ sobbed Edmund, and buried his face in the pillow. He knew what that meant.

‘Has mamma come home?’ he asked presently.

‘Yes, she is with your little sister.’

‘Let me go to her,’ said Edmund, trying to rise.

‘Ah, how my shoulder hurts!’

Alice had slipped away to go to look at Baby Bud. The doctor said—

'Come, let us see your shoulder.' He found that it was badly sprained. 'You must stay where you are for to-day,' he said, and he helped Edmund to bed, talking kindly to him the while.

The day passed sadly for the poor boy. His little comforter Alice came back to her post after her visit to the nursery.

'Poor Baby Bud is on a pillow on mamma's lap,' she said. 'And she makes such a sad little cry, the darling! She won't go from mamma for a minute.'

'Is mamma very unhappy?' asked Edmund.

'She cries a great deal, and looks very white,' said Alice.

'Oh dear,' moaned Edmund; 'I wish she could come to me.'

'I daresay she will soon,' said Alice, 'when Baby Bud's asleep, perhaps. Shall I tell you a story, Eddy dear?'

'Yes, do,' said Edmund, glad of anything to divert his mind; and though it was only the rambling invention of a child of five years old, Alice's funny make-up of bogies and fairies and naughty little girls and boys, made him for a time forget his grief, and even once break out into a hearty laugh. 'Yours is rare nonsense,' he said.



CHAPTER II.

EDMUND.

WHEN Edmund next saw his darling Baby Bud, some days after her fall, he was quite shocked. All the rosy colour was gone from her dear little face, which was white as a lily. Her large blue eyes had lost their bright glance, and looked sad and full of pain. She lay now always on a soft down pillow, for she could not bear to be moved, her back hurt her so. She moaned constantly, in a way that it was pitiful to hear, and made poor Edmund's heart ache. His tears dropped silently as he saw her stretch out her little white hands to him, and try to smile when he came in.

'How glad she is to see you!' said Alice, who had brought Edmund to her bedside. 'Baby Bud! it's your own Eddy, dear. How she looks at your poor arm in its sling! She can't make it out at all! Isn't she pale? She shall be called our little White Violet!'

She wants you to take her. Ah! she mustn't be touched. Poor Baby Bud!'

Edmund could hardly bear it. He stooped over her and kissed her, and was turning away, when he heard a little feeble voice—'Eddy!'

It brought him back to her side in a moment. And from that time, in his play-hours, he was hardly ever to be got out of his mother's room, where the precious little one lay night and day, in a small bed close to her mother's. He would sit by her, singing nursery rhymes, and showing her pictures, thinking himself well rewarded with one little laugh or smile now and then. His first thought in the morning was Baby Bud, and she always looked for Eddy after breakfast, with the pretty flowers which he daily brought for her from the garden. At night she could not go to sleep without Eddy to sing to her and soothe her. It was 'Eddy!' 'Eddy!' all day long from the small weak voice, and when he was by her, the poor little White Violet seemed most to forget her pain.

It was a great comfort to him, who had so unwittingly been the cause of her sufferings. He never seemed able to forget *that*, and his whole heart poured itself out in one great love for the poor little maimed life. After a time she was taken out to lie in the garden on a sofa, and it was always Eddy who was to carry her there. He it was who found the fir-cones and horse-chestnuts for her to play with,

and brought her the first wild strawberries and blackberries. His pocket-money was always now saved up to buy something new for Baby Bud, and the one thought of his life seemed to be how he should make hers happy.

For many months poor Baby Bud lay on her back in pain. It was a weary life for a young child, and some little people that I know would have been very fretful and complaining about it. But from the first our sweet White Violet, infant though she was, took up her cross meekly. It was lovely to see her patience and gentleness, which grew with her growth. It was even surprising in such a tiny child. But there was One who helped her, no doubt—He who took the little children in His arms once, who feels for every pain and trouble of the least of His little ones. And when Violet was old enough to understand this, and to be told about that kind, good, unseen Father of hers, she was glad to bear what He had laid upon her.

There was nothing she liked so much as to be read to, and to be told stories. How Edmund racked his brain to think of something new and funny to amuse Baby Bud! Mamma said he was a walking story-box. Baby Bud liked best of all the winter evenings, when her little couch was drawn by the fire in the school-room, while papa and mamma were at dinner. Then Mary and Mildred, and Punny and Ferky, and Jessie,

and Alice on Edmund's knee, sat round the fire on low stools, close to dear Baby Bud, and listened to Edmund's wonderful 'make-ups,' as they called them. It was so nice and cosy, and Edmund did invent such funny things! I can't help thinking that this long practice of making-up stories for Baby Bud's enjoyment helped him to become the famous writer that he is now. Punny and Ferky were the two little brothers between Baby Bud and Alice. Their real names were Bernard and Percival. They were the most mischievous sprites, and great disturbers of the peace at story-telling time, as they could not sit still for two minutes without pinching and twitching and sparring with each other, and were continually tumbling off their stools, or upsetting the fire-irons, just at the most interesting parts of the story, so that sometimes there was a general outcry from the little girls—

'Punny and Ferky, you horrid boys! It's too bad! Do put them out, Edmund!'

And then Edmund would look very fierce, and make a sudden pounce upon the offenders, and threaten to lock them out, on which Punny and Ferky, with comical faces, would cry—

'We won't do it any more!'—adding privately, 'till next time!'

Punny and Ferky and Alice belonged properly to the nursery, but they were allowed to come into

the schoolroom, after the schoolroom tea was over, to see Baby Bud, who was always carried there at tea-time, from mamma's sitting-room, where she spent most of the day, as she was getting stronger. She did get stronger when she was about five years old, but she had still to lie down for many hours a day ; and sad to say, in spite of all the care that was taken, her little back was bowed out from the effects of her fall, and a hump began to grow there.

‘How dreadful!’ I fancy I hear some little girl say ; ‘wasn’t she *very* miserable?’

But the dear little patient Violet only said meekly, ‘God lets it come!’





CHAPTER III.

BABY BUD'S BIRTH-DAY.

THE sun shone brightly on a lovely morning in June. The lawn looked so green and fresh, all covered with sparkling dew-drops. The morning glory, twining in and out of the rustic trellis-work of the summer-house, had just opened its beautiful many-coloured cups.

But what are all the children so busy about in the summer-house at this time in the morning? They have not had breakfast yet. And why are they making those long wreaths of flowers, and ranging them all round the inside? And what are all those parcels, large and small, done up so neatly, which are piled on the rough table in the middle? There is some wonderful secret going on, surely!

'Here's the pen and ink, Edmund,' cried Mary, scampering in. 'I was so afraid Ellen wouldn't let me take it.—O dear!' in a voice of horror, 'I've inked my frock! What will nurse say?'

'Bother nurse!' shouted Punny, as he rode up and down the path on a stick. 'Who cares! Just like a girl, to be afraid of nurse!'

'Master Punny, I want you,' said a solemn voice behind him. 'You please to come with me, sir.'

Punny's bravery was all gone in a moment :—

'No, nurse dear! I won't say it again, indeed! I didn't know you could hear me! Please to forgive me! it's Baby Bud's birthday.'

'If it wasn't Baby Bud's birthday I should punish you, sir, for speaking in that way. *She* would never say such rude words.'

'But she's a *girl*!' persisted Punny.

'Oh then, you're not sorry, I see?' said nurse, coming nearer to Punny.

'Oh yes, I am, I am, I am!' cried Punny; 'I beg your very humble pardon!' and he went down on his knees and put up his two hands, and made such a pitiful face for a moment, and the next was laughing, perched up on the roof of the summer-house, like a little monkey as he was.

'It's lucky you're safe up there, sir,' said nurse. 'Master Edmund, will you please to put this little present with the others, for Miss Violet?'

'O nurse, what is it, what is it?' cried the little girls.

'A hood and cloak for her new doll,' said nurse, who of course had to take it out of its paper and display it to the admiring eyes of the sisters.

'Now, Edmund, write on mine, please,' said Mildred.

'And mine!'

'And mine!'

'Mine first!' cried Jessie.

'Don't be selfish,' said Edmund.

'I shall do them by ages. Twins, where are yours? Alike, of course!'

'Of course,' said Mary.

'A pair of doll's shoes, and a pair of doll's socks,' said Mildred, 'and we each give a shoe and a sock.'

There was a general laugh.

It was a great joke against the twins, that they did everything *in twin*, as they called it. When they were very small dots, they were found one day by their mamma both together in the corner, crying.

'How is this? both in disgrace?' asked mamma.

'Only Miss Milly, ma'am,' said nurse. 'I'm sure I don't know why Miss Mary's put herself there.'

'What Milly *doos*, I *doos*!' said Mary indignantly.

It was to be hoped that Milly would always do the right thing, in future.

'What a time Hobden is, bringing out the sofa!' cried Jessie in a fretful voice. 'The bell will ring in a minute, I know, and it won't be all ready. What a plague he is!'

'Mamma said you weren't to say that word, Whiney-Piney!' said Ferky unwisely.

'How dare you call me Whiney-Piney, sir?' cried Jessie. 'I'll slap you if you don't take care.'

'Will you? then I shall call you a hundred thousand million billion Whiney-Pineys! So there,' exclaimed the dauntless Ferky, at the same time taking to his heels, for he knew very well what was coming.

'Cut away, Ferky!' cried Punny from his perch.

If it had not been for the little glass basket in her hand, her present for Baby Bud, Jessie would have set off after her tormentor. As it was, she only stamped.

'How you children do fight!' said Edmund. 'Can't you keep the peace for five minutes? I'll tell you what it is now, and I mean it too—though it is Baby Bud's birthday, if there's any more sparring I'll not let the squabblers come to the story that I'm going to tell this evening, after tea, in the summer-house!'

This dreadful threat had the desired effect, and Edmund went on directing all the little gifts for Violet without any more disturbance.

'Here comes the sofa at last!' cried Alice, as Hobden appeared in the pathway, with Violet's little couch on his shoulder.

'Here in this corner, please, Hobden,' said Edmund. 'Twins, will you fetch the cushions?'

'Miss Jessie, will you please to come around here?' said Hobden, after he had duly admired all the decorations of the summer-house. 'I've got a little

fuchsia that I've been *raring* for Miss Violet, and I hope she'll please to accept it. She's a sweet little angel, she is, and the ways of the Lord are unsearchable—that they are, poor lamb!' said the old man, going on talking to himself, while he poked up the earth in the pot with the little flat bit of wood, on which was written the name of the fuchsia, 'Queen of Beauty.'

'It *is* a queen of beauty indeed!' said Jessie, as she admired the clusters of large white blossoms with their bright crimson centres.

'Take care of it, my dear,' said Hobden, putting it into Jessie's arms. 'I'm bringing up one for your birthday, again that comes round.'

'Oh, thank you, Hobden!' Jessie felt sorry that she had called him a 'plague' now. 'He isn't at all a plague,' she said to herself; 'he's a very nice old man.'

'Oh, this is grand!' said Edmund. 'We'll put the fuchsia in the middle of the table, and the other things round it. Make haste, there's the bell!'

The twins came flying with the cushions at this moment, and then all had to hurry in to breakfast, amid a chorus of happy voices.

'How nice it looks, Edmund!'

'Won't she be surprised!'

'Mamma says we may pick whatever fruit we like for our feast!'

'And we are to have a whole holiday, and do *exactly* what we like!'

Baby Bud did not get up to breakfast. Nurse always dressed her directly after, and then she was generally carried down to her mamma's sitting-room, or, if it was fine, into the garden. This was Edmund's business.

'Where are you taking me?' she said this morning, as instead of going to her usual place under the shade of the tulip tree, Edmund carried her to the end of the garden. 'And where are all the others? I haven't seen them yet.'

'Ah!' said Edmund, 'we shall see in a minute.'

'Oh, how lovely, how lovely!' was Violet's delighted cry, as he laid her on the sofa in the summer-house. There were wreaths of flowers all round, and a great V made of red and white roses, put up in front of her couch. The children were all clustered round her in a minute, kissing and hugging her, and crying, 'Look at your presents! look at your heaps of presents!'

'First let papa have his birthday kiss, for he has to be off,' said papa, who had to go to town every day early. 'Here is something for his Baby Bud!' and he placed a beautiful work-box on her lap, lined with blue, and fitted up with everything—coloured silks, and cardboard for markers, and materials for all kinds of pretty work. For our Violet was very clever with her tiny fingers, and could knit, and sew, and

make patchwork, and all sorts of little affairs ; and she had already hemmed a handkerchief for papa, which no doubt put the thought of this lovely work-box into his head.

‘O thank you, darling papa!’ cried Violet. ‘It’s too beautiful!’

‘One more kiss, and I must go, my Bud,’ said papa.

‘Mamma’s present comes next, please!’ said mamma, who had been standing in the entrance, with something in her hand which was covered with a white handkerchief.

‘A baby doll! O mamma! mamma!’ cried Violet, uncovering the pretty little head of flaxen hair. ‘A robe like a real baby! What a sweet! Blue sash, and ties for the sleeves! My pretty baby! Thank you, dear mamma, this is Baby Bud’s little Bud!’

Now came the undoing of the many parcels on the table. There were all sorts of little treasures, and each was a fresh delight. Nurse’s white silk hood and scarlet cloak for the doll; the shoes and socks from the twins, which caused a great laugh; Jessie’s pretty glass basket, which she had bought with her last pocket-money at the Crystal Palace; a picture-book from Alice, and a box of sugar-plums from Punny and Ferky, who thought there was nothing better in the world; a pincushion from Ellen, the housemaid; a marker from Sarah, the under-nurse,

and a Tunbridge ware box from Kate. Hobden's lovely fuchsia, too—we must not forget that.

‘But what is that chirping sound I hear?’ said Violet, suddenly looking up, and for the first time seeing a bright golden-coloured canary, in a new cage, hanging from the roof of the summer-house. ‘For me! O Edmund!’—as he unhooked the cage, and put it on Violet’s lap. ‘A real live dicky for my own! I am the happiest little girl! I am quite fat with happiness!’





CHAPTER IV.

THE ENCHANTED WALNUTS.

HERE'S a set-out!' exclaimed papa, putting his head into the summer-house at five o'clock. 'What's going on?'

The children were very busy laying out the tea-table, and filling small plates with strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and currants, which made a most inviting show.

'It's Baby Bud's birthday feast, papa,' said Mildred.

'And we're going to make *real* tea ourselves—all by ourselves!' said Alice.

'Won't you invite me?'

'O papa!' with an amused laugh.

'I think I shall come in the middle as a giant, and swallow up tea-pot and all! You've no room for anything more, have you?'

'O yes, papa!'

'Papa, what have you got?'

‘O papa, what is in that parcel?’

‘Papa, is it for us?’

‘O you very best of all papas in the world!’ as from the hand which papa had cleverly kept behind him came forth a beautiful birthday cake, sugared over.

‘Where’s the little Bud?’

‘Resting, papa, till tea is ready.’

‘I shall go and see her, and join you all after dinner, and we’ll have some games.’

‘O papa dear, how nice!’

‘Now let us decorate the dishes with flowers,’ said Mildred.

It was all finished, and looking very pretty, when a little later Edmund came out, carrying his dear Baby Bud, whom he laid tenderly on her sofa, covering her feet with a shawl.

They had a very merry tea, and Edmund had enough to do to keep them in order. Indeed Punny and Ferky very nearly lost hearing the story, they were so wild and mischievous,—putting salt on Edmund’s plate for sugar, and shrieking with delight at the face he made when he put a strawberry covered with it into his mouth; and pinning the twins’ frocks together, so that when they got up and moved away quickly, there was a sudden rent, which filled their faces with dismay at the thought of nurse.

‘Once for all, young sirs, I tell you this!’ said Edmund. ‘If you don’t behave yourselves, I’ll shut

you up in the tool-house, to be company for the spiders!—Now for the story. Baby Bud, you must choose what it's to be about.'

'About boys,' said Violet, 'I like tales about boys. And it must be a bogie tale, with *magics* in it.'

'Yes, yes!' cried the little girls.

'Now, Baby Bud, you're a brick!' said Punny, 'to choose the very sort I like best!'

'She's two bricks,' cried Ferky, 'for it's just what I like best too.'

'*Pax!*' said Edmund. 'Now, remember, the first disturber goes into the tool-house! My story is called "The story of the Enchanted Walnuts."'

'Walnuts! how *could* they be enchanted?' broke in Punny.

'Hush, do!' cried Jessie.

'We shall see!' said Edmund.

And he began——

The Enchanted Walnuts.

Once upon a time there lived in an old castle a nobleman who was called the Graf, and his wife was called the Grafinn. And they had one little son, who was called Eoc.

Now Eoc, let me tell you, was the naughtiest of little boys under the sun. There was nothing that he would not do, except what he was told. He was the plague of the whole castle. He

once pinched the nose of his old nurse so tight that it never came back to the right shape again, but remained flat as a card ; and when the Grafinn told him he was a sad boy, and shook her head at him, he pulled off her wig, and put it in the fire. As for Fritz, Eoc's little page, he had a hard life ; for sometimes he was Eoc's football, and sometimes his horse. And Eoc would pluck out his hair by handfuls, and say he was only plucking a goose ; and Fritz had to laugh all the time, and pretend he liked it so much ! And everything that Fritz had Eoc would take away and keep for his own. One day as Eoc and Fritz were walking by the bank of a river which flowed near the castle, they saw an old woman sitting in the doorway of a hut, with some very large walnuts in her lap, which she was counting.

‘I shall have those walnuts,’ said Eoc ; ‘they are big. Go and get them from that old woman.’

So Fritz went up to the old woman and said to her—

‘The young Lord Eoc has sent me for your walnuts. He wants them.’

‘He cannot have them,’ she answered, and went on counting and muttering to herself.

When Eoc heard what the old woman said, he ran to her, and cried angrily—

‘Old hag ! give me those walnuts instantly !’

‘I cannot spare them,’ she answered. ‘For shame,

to take them from a poor old woman! You have plenty in your own garden.'

'Not so big,' said Eoc; 'I must have these. Give them me, I say!'

'Nay,' said the old woman; 'they are all the food I have.'

'What do I care for that? I will have them!'

cried Eoc. 'See if I don't.'

'I wish you joy of them if you get them,' said the old woman; and she got up and went into her hut with the walnuts, and shut the door.

Eoc, in a passion, battered at it with all his might, but could not get in. At last, finding his rage useless, he went back to the castle, determined somehow or other to get the big walnuts. He could not sleep in his bed for thinking of them. And in the night, when all in the castle were fast asleep, he got up softly, and creeping out through a side-door into the castle garden, he got over the wall, and went down to the old woman's hut by the water-side.

All was quite still; no sound to be heard but the rippling of the river as it flowed on. Eoc stopped and looked in at the lattice. The big walnuts lay on the ledge inside, and Eoc put in his hand through the lattice-work. He could just reach them. He took them out one by one, and put them into his pockets, all but one, which he could not get through the lattice, and so he left it. Then he ran home as fast as he could.

But as he ran he heard very odd noises near him, which startled him. He stopped and looked round. There was nothing to be seen ; so he ran on again. Still the noises kept close to him. Again he stopped to listen ; and then he found that the sounds came from the walnuts in his pocket. They were jumping and bobbing up and down, and knocking against each other, as if they were alive, and struggling to get out. He put in his hand and thrust them down ; but they resisted it and jumped up again, and clattered about like things bewitched.

Eoc was frightened. 'The horrid things!' he exclaimed ; and snatching them from his pocket, he threw them all away, and ran on as fast as he could.

Still the noises pursued him, and looking back, he saw, to his horror, that the walnuts were coming after him, close at his heels. Giving them a great kick in his anger, he scattered them all in the air ; but whenever they reached the ground, they came after him again ; and the faster he ran, the faster they jumped. At length he reached the wall of the castle garden.

'Now,' said he to himself, as he scrambled over it, 'I shall be rid of these tiresome walnuts!'

But the walnuts jumped over too, and pursued him through the garden.

'At least they cannot get through the door!' said Eoc, and he darted into the castle through the little

side-door, shut it, and bolted it, leaving the walnuts outside.

He crept up to his bedroom, and as he entered it he found them frisking and jigging about the floor.

'Shall I never get away from these jumping walnuts?' exclaimed Eoc. He opened his window and threw them out, shutting it again quickly; but when he turned round, he found them dancing on his bed. Then he locked them up in his box, but no sooner had he done so, than he saw them playing antics on the table. He threw them into the fire, and they hopped out again; he stamped on them and crushed them, and the next moment they were whole again as before.

'What is to be done?' cried Eoc in great alarm. 'Fritz!' he cried, waking his little page. 'Fritz, save me from these big walnuts!'

Fritz sprang up and tried to catch them, but they would not let him touch them, and when he tried to, they bounced up into his face, and hit him so hard that he fled away terrified out of the castle, and never came near it again. And when the day dawned Eoc was still waging war with the big walnuts.

Nothing he could think of would put an end to them; water would not drown them, fire would not burn them, the earth would not hold them; when he buried them they came up again. Wherever Eoc went

they followed—up-stairs, down-stairs, into every part of the castle, and out of doors ; where he was, there were the big walnuts. All day long he was running away from them, and all day long they were running after him. All night long he was trying to hide himself from them, and all night long they were peeping at him. If he put his head under the coverlet, the big walnuts were there ; if he put his head outside the coverlet, the big walnuts were there. When he shut his eyes, he saw them through his eyelids ; when he hid himself in the dark, he still saw the big walnuts. At his meals they ranged themselves round his plate ; if he rode out, they jumped on the horse's back and rode out too ; if he climbed a tree and sat on a bough, they hopped upon it ; if he sailed away in a boat in the water, they floated after him. They were the torment of his life, he could not get away from them. When he walked, they walked ; when he ran, they ran ; when he stood still, they stood still—always with him. And they got bigger every day.

No one would approach Eoc ; the servants fled away from him, the Grafinn fainted whenever he came near her ; the Graf said, 'Our son is certainly bewitched !'

Never was anything like it ! Pitter patter, up the stairs, pitter patter, down the stairs, jig jig, all day long ; everybody knew when Eoc was coming—Eoc

and the big walnuts ; and everybody got out of the way. And day and night Eoc's cry was, 'Save me from these big walnuts !'

He grew thin and pale and sad, and all the folk said Eoc would die : and they wondered whether the big walnuts would be quiet, when he did.

How many times Eoc wished that he had never seen them !

At last he thought within himself that he would go to the old woman to whom they belonged, and beg her to take them back. So he set out for her hut by the river side with the big walnuts jumping round him ; and as he went along they jumped higher and higher in the air, and somehow his heart grew lighter.

But when he reached the spot where the hut had been, it was gone, and there was a big walnut in its place.

Eoc sat down on the bank and wept : his only hope was gone.

'Oh !' he cried, 'will *no* one save me from these big walnuts !'

He had hardly spoken, when the walnut which stood in the place of the hut opened, and Eoc saw a little dinky woman sitting in it. She said to him—

'I will save you from these big walnuts.'

'Will you ? oh, will you ?' cried Eoc.

'On one condition,' she answered.



EOC AND THE WALNUT FAIRY.—PAGE 28.

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‘Anything!’ exclaimed Eoc.

‘You must be shut up in a walnut yourself,’ said the little woman.

‘Must I?’ said Eoc. ‘Is there no other way?’

‘None,’ she replied.

‘O dear!’ said Eoc, trembling. ‘How can I? Will it hurt? Shall I jump too?’

‘Ask no questions,’ said the little woman. ‘I have no time to lose. Will you, or will you not?’

‘I will!’ cried Eoc. ‘Only save me from these big walnuts!’

Then the little woman sprang out of the walnut, and grew suddenly bigger, and Eoc knew that she was the very same old woman whom he had seen sitting at the door of the hut. She seized Eoc, and doubling him up, squeezed him into the big walnut, and shut him in.

Then taking it in her hand, she whirled it thrice round, and threw it into the air; and it went up, up, up, and fell into the moon, where it jumped and hopped about, to the great astonishment of the little moon-men who dwell in the hill-sides there. How they laughed and shrieked, these little elves, as they came trooping by dozens out of their caves, to see the strange sight!

Eoc heard their cries, and wondered where he had come.

‘Aoh! Aoh!’ they cried, ‘let us catch it! Aoh!’

Aoh !' The strange beast !' and they began to run after the big walnut, as it went jumping along. When it came to the ground, they shouted, 'Now !' and made a rush at it ; but just as they reached it, with arms outstretched to seize it, up it popped again, and down they all went on their faces, shrieking 'Aoh ! Aoh !'

This happened a great many times, and the little moon-men got very angry at being so baffled. At last, with a loud shout, they rushed at it and threw themselves upon it, scrambling over each other's heads to get to the top of it, and keep it down.

'We have it!—hurrah !' they cried. 'Aoh ! Aoh ! the wicked beast !'

But up it went again in the air, with the little moon-men on it, and they tumbled off head over heels in all directions, spluttering, and crying 'Aoh ! Aoh !' more fiercely than ever.

In a great rage they got up again, and ran after the big walnut very fast indeed. They chased it all over the face of the moon, and at last caught it just as it came down on the slope of a hill, and overpowering it with their numbers they rolled it into a deep pit in the hill-side, which had been there ever since the moon had the small-pox.

Up to this part of Edmund's story there had been wonderful quiet ; but when it came to the moon's

having the small-pox all the children burst out into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

‘Well!’ said Edmund, very gravely, ‘didn’t you know that?’

‘The moon had the small-pox!’ cried Mildred. ‘How could it? It isn’t a person!’

‘Don’t be stupid!’ said Jessie. ‘Don’t you know that there’s a man in the moon?’

‘But it was the *moon* that had the small-pox!’ persisted Mildred.

‘Of course it was!’ said Edmund. ‘Why, that’s how the moon comes to be pitted all over, as you’ll know when you learn astronomy.’

‘Pitied!’ said Violet wonderingly. ‘Oh yes, I see, because it had the small-pox, poor thing!’

‘Just so,’ said Edmund.

‘But I don’t see—’ began Mildred.

‘Be quiet, can’t you?’ said Punny, giving her a poke. ‘It’s the girls that make all the row.’

‘I’m sure it isn’t then,’ said Mary, taking the part of her twin. ‘Ferky, you horrid boy! don’t!’

For Ferky had put a beetle on her neck, and Mary could not bear insects. She began to scream.

‘Now, I tell you what it is!’ cried Edmund, fiercely jumping up. But Punny and Ferky both took to their heels and fled.

‘Good riddance!’ said Jessie. ‘Now we shall have some peace!’

So Edmund went on (not in the least aware that Punny and Ferky were lying in wait close outside, brewing fresh mischief)——

Well, as I said, the big walnut was rolled into one of these pits, and the little moon-men hastened to fill up the pit with stones and earth ; and then, satisfied with having avenged themselves, they went back to their caves to rest for the night.

In the morning, great was the surprise of the little moon-men to see growing up out of the pit which they had filled a huge walnut-tree. The branches were laden with big walnuts, but they were so high up that the little moon-men could not get them.

Every night an old woman came to the tree and pulled one, and as she plucked it, she cried——

‘Bleed ! bleed !
For thine evil deed !’

and the tree bled where the big walnut came off.

When a hundred nights were gone, there remained only one walnut on the tree. The old woman came as usual and pulled it ; and as she did so, the walnut tree groaned, and cracked, and shrivelled up, and split open, and out of it came Eoc.

‘So !’ said the old woman. ‘What do you think of it ?’

‘Jolly !’ said Eoc. ‘Give me another toss !’

‘Willingly!’ answered the old woman. And she took him up, and threw him right out of the moon, and he fell into the lap of the Grafinn as she sat in her castle garden. And the little moon-men peeped over the edge of the moon as he fell, and cried—

‘Aoh! aoh! be a good boy! Aoh! aoh!’

‘Aoh! aoh! be a good girl!’ cried a voice outside, and at the same moment the little girls had a shower of spiders on their heads and necks, which Punny and Ferky had been busy collecting. There was a general scream and scramble, while Edmund rushed after the offenders, and gave them what they deserved. What this was, every boy who plagues his little sisters knows!





CHAPTER V.

THE RAINBOW.

IT was a dull, wet day. The windows looked very 'tearful,' as Violet said, with the long rain-streams chasing each other down the panes ; and the garden beyond was still more dreary-looking—what with the rivers in the gravel paths, and the poor battered flowers lying on their beds.

'How horribly dismal!' said Jessie, as she stood idly in the window, following the rain-drops with her fingers. 'There's nothing to do!'

'I should not think so, if I could move about as you can,' said Violet. 'I should go and make up a play with the others.'

'I don't like playing with them ; they get cross with me,' said Jessie. 'That horrid Ferky pulls my hair, and Punny pinches.'

'Why don't you paint?' asked Violet.

'I've got nothing to paint ; and besides, I've lost my paint-box.'

‘Wouldn’t Milly come and play table croquet with you?’

‘I’m tired of that.’

‘Well, a story then; I wish you would read me one.’

‘I hate reading; there’s quite enough of that in the schoolroom.’

Violet sighed. ‘How odd it is, Jessie!’ she said; ‘the things that I should like, and can’t do, are just the things that you can do, and don’t like. I often wish I might come and do lessons with you all in the schoolroom; and I always think table croquet must be such a nice game, and wish that I could play at it.’

The little girls were silent, each thinking her own thoughts—Jessie thinking how dull and stupid it was to have nothing to do, and Violet wondering why children so often had just the things they did not like. She did some little lessons every morning with her mamma; she could read and write very well; but the music, and drawing, and dancing, which her sisters learnt, she could not; and those were the very things she would have so liked to do! But Violet was learning one great lesson, which was better than all these. What was that?

Patience.

There can be no better lesson for any one. For we are told that if we ‘let patience have her perfect work,’ we shall ‘be perfect and entire, *wanting nothing*.’ So I cannot help thinking that the little Violet was

really learning more than all her sisters in the school-room, though she did not learn half the things that they did.

‘There’s a rainbow!’ cried Jessie suddenly. ‘I do believe it is going to clear up! How glad I shall be! I shall go in the garden.’ And away she ran, full of her own pleasure, without a thought of her poor little sister whom she was leaving alone. If Jessie was dull on a rainy day, she who could do all sorts of things to amuse herself, what must Violet have been, obliged to lie down for so many hours? Jessie did not think of *that*.

Violet lay quiet for some time, watching the rainbow as it gradually faded away in the sky, and thinking how lovely it was, and how wonderful, with its perfect colours melting one into the other.

When it was quite gone, and the sky had begun to clear, Violet heard the merry voices of her little brothers and sisters coming down the stairs. They were going out in the garden.

Violet hoped they would open the door of the room where she lay and come in, and say something; it was so tedious to be alone!

But no; they seemed to have forgotten her. The voices passed on, Punny and Ferky, Mary and Milly, Jessie’s loudest of all (Alice was in bed with a cold), and then they died away, as one after another the children ran out of the hall-door, and down the stone steps

which had been the scene of poor Violet's sad fall. As Violet heard the little feet patter down the steps, she thought of this, and she said to herself, sorrowfully—

‘If it had not been for that, I might be running out in the garden with them now! How nice it must be to be free, as they are; and to be able to run and jump and play! O dear! O dear!’

The tears came into Violet's eyes; it did seem so very hard to bear sometimes; especially when, as now, the others ran off to enjoy themselves, and left her alone. Poor little Violet! *They* did not know, perhaps, how hard it was to her. But there was One who did.

Just then Edmund came in, with a roll of pictures in his hand.

‘O Eddy! I'm so glad you're come!’

‘See what I have brought you to do, Bud!’

‘Oh, what?’ Violet raised herself on the sofa, and looked eagerly at the roll.

‘Do you remember my telling you about the Hospital for Sick Children in London?’

‘Yes, indeed I do. I am often thinking about it, and wish I could send them some things.’

‘That's just it!’ said Edmund, undoing his parcel. ‘Look here! I thought you would like to make them a scrap-book.’ And he unrolled some sheets of brightly coloured French pictures—scraps of all kinds: boys and girls, birds and fishes, soldiers and

horses, market-women and peasants, flowers and fruits. Violet clapped her hands in glee.

‘How beautiful!’ she cried. ‘I shall like doing it so!’

‘They must be cut out first,’ said Edmund. ‘And then we will make a stuff-book, like the one in the nursery.’

Violet laughed. ‘Calico, you mean,’ she said. ‘Boys call everything *stuff*!’

‘Well, calico, then,’ said Edmund. ‘And we will have some paste, and stick on these things, and won’t the poor little children just like it, that’s all!’

‘Will they know that I helped to make it?’ asked Violet.

‘I’ll send word,’ said Edmund. ‘Where are some scissors?’

Then he drew a small round table close to the sofa where Violet lay, and they both set to work busily.

• Violet was quite bright and happy again now; it was so nice to have something to do for the little sick children!

Edmund had been to the hospital once with his father, and he had told Violet about it on his return.

‘I have so often thought about those poor little children since,’ said Violet. ‘Are there any there like me?’

‘I saw one,’ answered Edmund. ‘A little boy. He was a great deal worse off than you, though, my Bud. He was not only obliged to lie down always, but he was *blind*.’

‘O Eddy dear, how sad!’ Then Violet stopped short. She had never thought of such a thing as *that* before. Suppose she had been blind too! How many enjoyments she had which were denied to that poor little boy! What a small trial hers was, compared to his! How thankful she ought to be that she could see!—see to read, to write, to work, to paint; see all the lovely flowers and trees, and sunrise and sunset; see pictures and pretty things; and, best of all, see the dear faces of those she loved. That poor child had none of these pleasures, which she enjoyed every day. His world was dark. Violet did not speak for so long, thinking of these things, that at last Edmund said—

‘Are you dull, my Bud?’

‘No,’ said Violet, ‘not now. But I was, before you came in. And what you said about that little boy has made me feel sorry.’

‘Why sorry?’ asked Edmund.

‘Because,’ said Violet, ‘I was unhappy at being left alone; and yet there was that beautiful rainbow for me to look at. I never thought before how good it is to *see*! Poor little boy, I could cry for him! I wish he could see like me! I wish he could have seen the rainbow!’

‘He *will* see one day,’ said Edmund gravely. ‘It is only for a little while.’

‘Yes,’ said Violet. ‘And there is a rainbow round God’s throne!’



CHAPTER VI.

PUNNY AND FERKY.

VIOLET'S papa and mamma had gone out to an archery meeting some miles off, and had taken Edmund with them.

There was to be a grand 'high' tea in the nursery all together, Miss Wilson, the governess, being away. It was holiday time, and nurse used to say she should be only too glad when it was over. No tongue could tell the trouble she had with all those young monkeys; she said it really was dreadful! Miss Wilson did, to be sure, keep them in some sort of order, but there! as soon as she was gone, they ran wild!

Punny and Ferky were the chief offenders; they played all sorts of tricks, and Mary and Mildred were generally in disgrace when *they* were.

'Hurrah! I say! mamma has given out cake and jam for tea!' cried Ferky, rushing into the room where Violet lay, still busy with her scrap-book. 'Isn't it jolly!'

‘Very,’ said Violet.

‘He only cares for eating,’ said Jessie. ‘Just look at him! He’s got your paste-brush, Violet. Ferky, don’t, you horrid boy!’ she cried, as Ferky, in revenge, dabbed it in Jessie’s face.

‘You shouldn’t call me a glutton, then!’ said Ferky.

‘I didn’t!’ cried Jessie.

‘You did!’ roared Ferky.

‘If the cap fits, wear it!’ retorted Jessie mockingly.

Ferky made no answer to this, but darted out of the room.

‘Good riddance!’ cried Jessie after him.

‘The same to you!’ shouted Ferky, as the next moment he appeared, holding up a saucepan, which he had seized from the kitchen. Jessie saw what was coming, but he was too quick for her. It was down on her head and over her face, before the cook, who had followed Ferky after her saucepan, could stop him.

‘If the cap fits, wear it!’ he shouted, holding the saucepan on, while Jessie’s shrieks resounded through the house, and brought down nurse and Ellen from the upper regions.

‘Hurrah! jolly! look at Jessie’s new hat!’ cried Punny, dancing about and clapping his hands, while Violet, frightened at all this uproar, began to cry, and entreat Ferky to leave Jessie alone.

‘You very naughty boy!’ exclaimed nurse, as she

came in. 'How dare you be so unkind to your sister, sir? Come up-stairs directly, and go to bed this moment!'

Nurse's tone put Ferky in a fright. He let go the saucepan, and fled into the kitchen, and out through the back yard, followed by Punny, nurse, cook, Ellen, and, of course, all the children. In the shrubbery they lost him. Ferky had doubled and got back into the kitchen, with Punny after him; quick as thought, they locked the kitchen door, and fastened the windows.

'We'll lock them out!' said Ferky.

'Famous!' cried Punny.

Then they rushed round to the front door, locked that, and bolted all the windows.

'Now let us get our tea while we can!' said Ferky.

'It's all ready,' said Punny. 'What rare fun! Won't they be angry when they find they can't get in!'

Up went these very naughty boys to the nursery, where the tea was laid out in grand style.

'I shall sit in Mrs. Nurse's chair,' said Ferky.—'I say, the tea-pot's hot!'

He proceeded to pour out the tea, making a great river in the tea-tray, while Punny seized upon the pot of jam, and took out a big spoonful.

'Isn't it good, that's all!' he said, as he plastered it upon his bread.

‘I like it best upon cake,’ said Ferky, and he helped himself to a large slice of plum-cake, and began to cover it with jam.

‘Give us some more sugar,’ said Punny; ‘my tea isn’t sweet enough!’

‘What a wax they will be in!’ said Ferky, pouring himself out another cup of nurse’s strong tea. ‘It’s rather good fun, I think!’

‘Yes, isn’t it?’ echoed Punny, but he did not seem to be quite comfortable in his mind.

‘They can’t get in till we like!’ said Ferky presently. ‘That’s one good thing. Hand me the jam, Pun. Have you done?’

‘Yes,’ said Punny, whose heart was beginning to fail him, as he thought of what was to come. ‘I’m not very hungry. I wonder what nurse will do to us when she does get in?’

‘It’s all Jessie’s fault!’ said Ferky stoutly. ‘She’s the one that ought to be punished.’

‘Hush! I hear something!’ said Punny, growing very pale.

‘Nonsense, they can’t get in!’ answered Ferky, growing pale also though, for he *did* hear voices.

‘Hadn’t we better hide?’ said Punny. ‘O do, Ferky! I’m frightened! They *are* come in! Hide! hide!’

‘The linen press!’ whispered Ferky. There was a sort of rubbish cupboard under the linen press, which

stood in a recess in the nursery ; into this they crept, among bags of old linen, railway-rugs, and blankets—only just in time. The nursery-door opened, and in came nurse, followed by Ellen, cook, and the children.

‘I made sure I should find them here!’ she said.

‘They’ve been here,’ said Ellen. ‘Look at the things!’

‘They’ve eaten up half the jam!’ cried Jessie.

‘They’ve been at my tea-pot!’ cried nurse, in great wrath. ‘Only let me find them!’

‘Let us have a hunt!’ cried Jessie, who was very anxious for the offenders to be punished. ‘Where can they be?’

Punny pinched Ferky, and squeezed himself as far back among the blankets as he could, trembling.

The search began. First they all went into the night-nursery, and looked under the beds, and into the shoe-cupboard, and the clothes-basket, and the wardrobe, but there were no boys to be found there; then into the playroom, which opened out of the night-nursery, but there were no boys there.

‘They must be down-stairs,’ Ferky and Punny heard nurse say, and away flocked the whole tribe back again through the day-nursery, and out into the passage. Nobody thought of the clothes-press. It was supposed to be full of things, and to have no room for little boys. Ferky drew a long breath when all was still again.

‘I’m so afraid!’ whispered Punny. ‘What do you think she’ll do?’

Ferky did not like to think of that, so he said—

‘I don’t know. I say, hadn’t we better slip out, and go in the garden? There will be no getting out if we don’t go now.’

‘Yes, do,’ said Punny.

‘Get out then,’ said Ferky. ‘I can’t move!’

Punny opened the door, and crept partly out, but suddenly scrambled in again, exclaiming in a terrified whisper—

‘They’re coming back! Quick, Ferky, let me get in!’

He got back into his corner in haste. Ferky pushed up the rugs and blankets to the front of the cupboard, so as quite to hide them both, and to leave a space behind for him and Punny. But in doing this, he pushed the cupboard door a little way open, without knowing it.

Then they lay crouched up very still. Some one had come into the nursery. They thought it was nurse, and they held their breaths. She bustled about, tidying the tea-table, which they had left in a great mess, and putting the chairs round, and poking up the fire.

Seeing the lower door of the clothes-press partly open, she stooped down, and looked in. Then she closed the door, and turned the key in it. The

sound sent a pang through the little boys' hearts. They were locked in!

Punny nearly cried out, but Ferky caught hold of his hand, and squeezed it very tight. Then nurse went to the end of the passage, and called to the other children to come up to tea.

While she was gone, Ferky whispered, 'All right, be quiet; she never saw us!'

'But how shall we ever get out?' asked Punny. 'It's such a squash in here! I'd rather go out and be whipped at once; I don't like it!'

'Do be quiet,' said Ferky. 'I'll get Alice to unlock the door presently, when nurse is gone down.'

So Punny was obliged to be satisfied. They heard all the children come in and go to tea, and great were the grumbles at the half-empty jam-pot and the share of the cake which was left.

Punny and Ferky nearly laughed out loud to hear Jessie's lamentations.

'Where *can* they be?' said Violet.

'We've searched the whole house,' answered Milly. 'They must be in the garden somewhere, or the out-houses.'

'We've locked them out if they are,' said Jessie. 'It's their turn now. I hope they will like it.'

'I'm glad they have not got to go without their tea,' said Alice.

'And I'm very sorry,' said Jessie. 'It would just serve them right.'

‘Nurse, what will you do to them when you find them?’ asked Mary.

‘They will see,’ said nurse, in so dreadful a tone that there was a general silence. It was plain that she was very greatly displeased.

Punny and Ferky could hear all this, of course, in their hiding-place. How they quaked! Ferky began to think it would have been better if he had not gone quite so far, and Punny, poor Punny! he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not joined in Ferky’s naughtiness. He dared not speak or move, however, much as he longed to go out at once and beg nurse to forgive him. When tea was over, he thought—‘Now nurse will be going down, and we shall be able to get out. It is so horrid to be shut up in here!’

Ferky was beginning to be of the same mind. The little girls were having a game at gipsies, and the boys wished they could be at play with them too.

‘It *was* rather stupid of us to get in here,’ thought Ferky.

‘How nice it is to play without those plaguing boys!’ said Jessie. ‘I’m so glad they’re not here.’

‘It is a comfort,’ said Milly, ‘to be in peace for once.’

‘They are such torments,’ said Mary. ‘I wish they were gone to school.’

‘You would soon wish them back again,’ said Alice.

'It's rather stupid to have no boys ; if they only would not pull our hair !'

'Yes, and if they only would not fillip us !' said Milly.

'Nor *boo* in our ears !' said Mary. 'They wouldn't be so bad then.'

'Well, I think boys are plagues,' said Jessie, 'and I wish the world was full of girls. That horrid Ferky, to put a saucepan on my head ! He hurt my nose so ! No one but a boy would think of such a thing.'

Violet was now fetched by Ellen to go to bed ; and the under-nurse, who had just come in, took Mary and Mildred away to go to bed also. Ferky waited anxiously, in hopes that nurse would leave the room ; but no, she was sitting down to her sewing quite comfortably by the fire. It was beginning to be serious ; what if she were to sit there all the evening ? Ferky made up his mind that he would go to sleep in the clothes-press. When nurse was gone to bed, at any rate, he and Punny could roll themselves up in the blankets. It was rather dreary certainly ; but there were two or three chinks in the cupboard, through which the candle-light came in, so it was not pitch dark. How quiet Punny was ! Could he be going to sleep ? Just as Ferky thought this, he heard a little snore close to him. He gave Punny a gentle shake, which woke him ; but it put Ferky in a great fright. He felt hot all over. What if nurse had heard it !

It did not seem so, however. She called Alice to come and have her hair plaited, as she would have to go to bed directly.

‘Will you put me to bed, nurse?’ asked Alice.

‘Not to-night,’ answered nurse shortly, and began to do Alice’s hair.

‘Are you going to look any more for Punny and Ferky?’ Alice asked presently. ‘I am so unhappy about them, nurse,’ she added; ‘I’m afraid they’re lost!’

‘I shall take no more trouble about them,’ replied nurse, in an awful tone. ‘They may stay where they are, wherever that may be, until their papa comes home. It won’t be long first.’

Ferky felt cold all over when he heard nurse say this. He began to think it would be better for them to come out at once, and throw themselves on her mercy. As soon as Alice and Jessie were gone to bed he would. Jessie’s hair was done next, and the under-nurse came and took her and Alice away. Then the nursery was so still that the little boys could hear the click of nurse’s thimble against her needle every time she made a stitch.

It became more and more dreadful. Ferky kept on poking Punny to keep him awake. At last he could bear it no longer. He whispered very softly into Punny’s ear—

‘I’m going to speak!’

Then a little penitent voice came forth from the clothes-press—

‘Nurse!’

Nurse started, and then went on with her work again.

‘Nursey dear!’

Still the thimble went on clicking against the needle.

‘Nursey *dear*!’—two little penitent voices now.

No answer.

‘Nursey, *do* let us out!’

There was a loud ring at the hall-door bell, which made Punny and Ferky tremble in their shoes.

‘O nursey, dear nursey, let us out this once, and we will never do it again!’ they prayed.

‘Never, no, never!’ said Punny.

‘We are going down on our knees to you to let us out!’ cried Ferky. ‘Only this very once!’

‘And we will be good ever after!’ pleaded Punny.

Nurse stooped down and unlocked the door. How glad the little prisoners were to crawl out! They fell on their knees before nurse, and cried humbly—

‘*Please* to forgive us! We are very sorry!’ Then they burst out crying, and sobbed.

Nurse said, ‘We must talk about this to-morrow. Come to bed now.’



CHAPTER VII.

IN THE HAY MEADOWS.

PUNNY and Ferky did not go down to dessert for a week. When the others went, they stayed behind in the nursery, in disgrace. Their papa and mamma were very much displeased with them. The little boys made many good resolutions while they were up-stairs, but it is easier to make resolutions than to keep them.

It was lovely summer weather now, and the hay-making had begun. There were two fields called the Upper and Lower Meadows, just below the house, in one of which the hay was piled up in large cocks, —looking, Violet said, like the huts of the Lapps, dotted over the grass.

Nurse got out all the large round holland pinnies, nicknamed by the children ‘Daddy Quashys,’ from some old joke, and called the children to come out to spend the afternoon and have tea in the hayfield.

There was a clump of trees in the middle of the large meadow, which gave a pleasant shade, and here nurse brought out her work, and sat, to see that the children did not get into any mischief. Here, too, Edmund brought Baby Bud's cushions, and made her a charming little nest in one of the green hollows under the trees, and then carried her out to it. He was obliged to go back to his studies, but he gave her a story-book to read, and spread a shawl over her feet, promising to come out and have tea with them all by and bye.

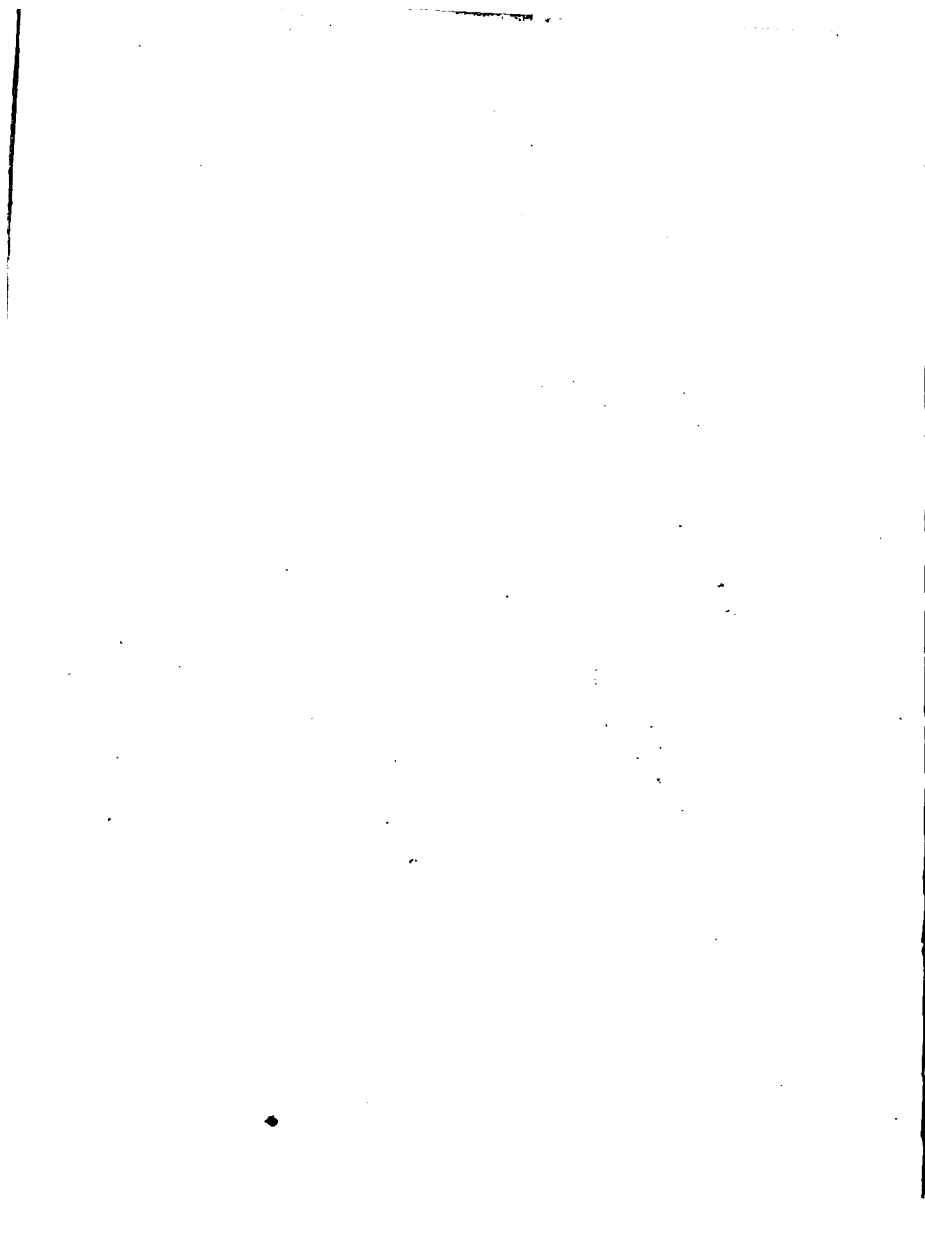
Violet lay for a long time watching the others at their play. It was almost better, she thought, on such a warm day, to be a looker-on, than a sharer, in such hot fun. Punny and Ferky were taking flying leaps at the haycocks, coming down on the top of them, and rolling off again, while the twins ran after them, trying to smother them in hay as they fell. Every now and then Mary and Milly got the worst of it, when Punny and Ferky pounced upon them, and nearly buried them. Jessie and Alice were chasing each other round and round the haycocks, and hiding under them in turn.

At last Violet was tired of watching them, and began to read. Nurse had gone in to see about the tea.

'How nice and quiet it is!' thought Violet presently, laying down her book. 'I like the gentle hum of the



VIOLET WATCHING THE CHILDREN AT PLAY.—PAGE 52.



insects, and the tiny chirps of the little birds, and the soft waving of the leaves overhead, and the blue sky, with its woolly clouds! How good it is of God to make us so many happinesses, and to give us this beautiful summer to enjoy!' Then her thoughts went on to the poor little blind boy of whom Edmund had told her, and she felt very sorry to think that he could never enjoy all these lovely things as she could. She was a very happy little girl not to be blind! What should she send to the poor blind boy? she asked herself. She should like to send him something; she had so many pleasures that he had not. The scrap-book would be of no use to him. What did blind children have to play with? Nothing!

She cast her eyes down upon her book, and it came into her mind that *that* was the thing, the very thing, --a story--to be read to! He should have her prettiest story-book, the one she liked best. It should go with the scrap-book.

Having settled this in her mind, Violet looked round, and wondered where all the children were. She could not see one of them. Perhaps they had sat down under the haycocks to rest.

Nurse came out by and bye with a basket, followed by Sarah, the under-nurse, carrying the kettle, and some of the tea-things. A cloth was spread in the middle of the grove, on the grass, and four stones placed at the corners to keep them down. Violet

looked on with interest, as nurse and Sarah put out the teapot and cups and saucers at one end, the plates round the cloth, and the bread and butter and seed-cake in the middle. Presently she saw Edmund coming down the meadow towards the grove, with a basket in his hand, which seemed to have cabbage-leaves in it.

‘I picked these for tea,’ he said, as he put the basket down by Violet.

‘Cabbages for tea!’ said Violet.

‘Look underneath,’ said Edmund.

‘Strawberries!’ cried Violet, lifting up the leaves. ‘O how kind of you! What beauties! Nurse, please put them out on a dish; quick, before the others come. Won’t they be pleased! We will make strawberry squash!’

‘Where are they all?’ asked Edmund.

‘Yes, where are they?’ said nurse, looking round.

‘I don’t see them.’

‘Neither do I,’ said Sarah.

‘In some mischief, no doubt,’ said Edmund. ‘I’ll run down the field and find them;’ and away he went.

Now you must know that this meadow opened into another, which went down in a steep slope to the river. There were a good many trees and shrubs along the bank, and several bushy islands in the middle. In some parts the river was very low, so that it would not reach above the ankles; but in

others it suddenly deepened into large holes, which made it very dangerous ; so that the children were never allowed to go down there, unless they were with Edmund or nurse.

The following conversation had taken place between the four little ones under one of the haystacks in the upper meadow.

Ferky. 'I say, wouldn't it be jolly to go and have a paddle in the river?'

Punny. 'O yes, rare! let us!'

Ferky. 'All right ; come on, twins!'

Mary. 'Won't nurse be angry?'

Punny. 'Ha! she's afraid of the cows!'

Mary. 'No indeed, I'm not!'

Milly. 'Where are Jessie and Alice?'

Ferky. 'Oh, we don't want them! come, if you're coming.'

And he ran off, followed by Punny, and climbed over the gate into the lower meadow.

Mary and Milly ran too, and they all raced together down the steep bank of the meadow so fast that they could only just stop themselves as they reached the river. Then they went along the brink a little way, to find a shallow place for paddling.

At last they came to a part of the river which Ferky, as leader of the rest, declared to be 'quite safe,' and they all sat down on the bank, and took off their boots and stockings.

'Let us put them all together in a heap by this bush,' said Mary. 'Then we shall know where they are, and the water won't reach them.'

Then the children stepped into the river one after the other. Mary and Milly gave little shrieks as the cold water rippled up over their ankles, and their feet slid about on the slippery stones. Punny and Ferky pretended to be very brave, and went plunging and splashing about, until they both very nearly tumbled over.

'I'm rather afraid,' said Mary to Milly, as they stood in the middle of the river, holding by each other's hands.

'What of?' asked Milly.

'Suppose the fishes should bite my toes,' said Mary.

'Hark at Mary,' cried Ferky; 'she's afraid the fishes will bite her!'

'Oh what a Molly!' cried Punny.

'Look, look at all those cows!' exclaimed Milly, with a face of terror. 'They're coming down to the river!'

The children turned to look, and saw a number of cows running down the slope towards them. Mary and Milly screamed; the valiant Ferky set off as fast as his legs would take him towards a little island in the bed of the river; but Punny caught hold of the twins, and dragged them after him to the river's bank, a little way up, where they got behind a tree.

It was the best thing he could have done ; for the cows, being hot, and teased by the flies, galloped into the water at once, and went straight to the little island, round which they stood in the water under the shade of the trees. Ferky was cowed now !

How fast the little girls' hearts did beat ! They were dreadfully afraid of cows at all times ; but now, when they knew they were doing wrong, they felt much more fear ; because they thought perhaps the cows might be allowed to horn them for a punishment.

They stayed under the tree on the bank for some time, and then, finding that the cows did not come out of the river, they crept along to get their stockings and boots. They did not want to paddle any more.

'This is the place !' cried Mary.

'They are not here then,' said Milly.

'Are you sure this was where you put them ?' asked Punny.

'Certain,' said Mary.

'The cows must have eaten them,' said Milly.

'Nonsense ! cows don't eat boots,' answered Punny.

'Where can they be then ?' asked Milly.

'You must have made a mistake,' said Punny.

'No, I am sure it was this place,' said Mary ; 'for I know it by that white stone. They were close to it.'

'What *can* have become of them ?' said Punny.

'The cows have taken them !' cried Milly, looking down the bank. 'I see a boot—it's yours, Pun, I

think—just down there, close to the water; and there's another in the river—do you see, by that stone? And this is where the cows came down.'

The children looked at one another in alarm. The cows must have dragged the boots and stockings with them as they rushed down the bank.

'There's one of the red stockings, Ferky's or yours,' said Mary, 'caught on that stick. Don't you see it flopping about in the water? There it is going now, —going,—gone!' as the stream carried it away.

Punny crept down the bank and picked up his one boot, all trodden into the mud; and then made a dart into the river after the other, which turned out to be one of Milly's. But no more were to be found.

Milly seated herself on the bank and cried, and Mary did the same.

'You stupid!' said Punny. 'What's the good of crying? It won't get back your stockings!'

'Oh, what will nurse say! O dear! O dear! what shall we do?' wept the little girls.

'We must do as the pilgrims used to do,' said Punny, determined to make the best of it.

'What was that?' asked the twins hopefully.

'Walk barefoot,' said Punny, who had heard this somewhere. 'I assure you they were very noble people, and they walked barefoot over all the lands.'

'But *we* are not noble,' said Mary sadly. 'It isn't noble to be naughty; so I don't think nurse

will take us for pilgrims. O dear! I'm afraid to go back!

'What did the pilgrims do about the thorns?' asked Milly. 'We shall get thorns into our feet as we go back.'

'Oh, they didn't mind,' said Punny; 'neither must you.'

Just at that moment the children heard a voice behind them.

'Oh, there you are!' cried Edmund, as he ran towards them. 'How could you think of going there, where you know you mustn't! How very naughty! Come away directly! Where's Ferky?'

'On the island, guarded by dragons,' said Punny, pointing to the cows.

'Very naughty children! you'll pay for this!' said Edmund. 'Ferky! Ferky! come here, sir, directly!'

Ferky was afraid to disobey. In great fear and trembling, he made his way through the cows to the shore.

'Where are my boots?' he asked, as he climbed up to the others.

Punny pointed to the river, which, as it flowed on, was carrying them further and further away.

'What!' exclaimed Ferky, with a look of dismay. 'You don't mean——?'

Punny nodded his head. 'Yes I do,' he answered. 'Gone!'

'How?' asked Ferky.

'Cows,' answered Punny.

'Come along,' said Edmund gravely, taking a hand of each of the little girls, who picked their way tenderly, and thought of the pilgrims.

Punny and Ferky followed in silence.

When they reached the grove they saw nurse and Sarah sitting at one end of the table-cloth, Violet lying close by, and Alice and Jessie—all at their tea.

'O Eddy! *do* beg for us,' whispered the little girls, sobbing.

'Do, do, Eddy! there's a brick!' whispered two more little voices behind.

The barefooted ones came into the grove ashamed and silent. Nurse's glance at their feet told her all.

I don't know what she *would* have done, if Edmund and Violet, and Alice and Jessie, had not all begged and prayed her to forgive them.

She did forgive them so far as to allow them to have their tea with the rest; and kind Violet gave them her shawl to sit upon. But directly after tea, instead of staying out to have a nice game in the cool of the evening, they had to go to bed in the broad daylight.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOYS OF MEASLES.

JESSIE dear, what makes you look so unhappy?' asked Violet, looking up from her book as Jessie came into the room, and threw herself into a chair.

'I don't know, I'm sure. I'm wretched!' and Jessie burst out crying.

'Have they been teasing you?' asked Violet.

'No. Leave me alone, Violet. I'm wretched, I tell you!'

'I'm so sorry,' said Violet kindly. She did not know what else to say. She went on reading her book in silence.

'How unkind you are!' exclaimed Jessie presently. 'Didn't I tell you I was wretched?'

'Yes, dear,' said Violet. 'Can I do anything for you?'

'Of course you can't!' said Jessie peevishly.

Again Violet was silent, turning over in her mind

what she could possibly say to Jessie to prevent her being wretched.

'Would you like to hear this tale about the ugly duck?' she asked at last. 'I'll begin it again if you would. It's so pretty.'

'No, my head aches,' said Jessie crossly.

'Hadn't you better lie down?' asked Violet.

'I can't,' said Jessie. 'How you tease! O dear, I feel so sick!'

'I think you must be ill,' said Violet gently.

'Of course I am!' answered Jessie. 'You might know that!'

'Won't you tell mamma?'

'What! and have a horrid dose? No, thank you!'

'I am sure you ought,' said Violet.

'Do be quiet!' returned Jessie fractiously. 'O dear, I feel so wretched! What shall I do!'

She looked flushed, and her eyes were dull and heavy. Every few minutes she kept sneezing, and then she cried because she couldn't help it, and it was so tiresome!

Her mamma came in soon, to Violet's great relief. She saw at once that Jessie was not well, and sent for nurse.

'She has been sneezing all this morning like this, ma'am,' said nurse. 'I think she must be sickening for measles. They're very much about.'

Mamma gave a sigh as she thought of the sick

house there would be if this were the case. Edmund was the only one who had had the measles, so all the rest would most likely take them.

‘You had better put Miss Jessie to bed,’ she said to nurse.

‘Why, mamma?’ whined Jessie. ‘I don’t want to go to bed.’

‘It is better for you,’ said her mamma; ‘and I wish it—that is enough,’ and she went out of the room.

Jessie set up a howl. ‘I don’t want to go,’ she cried. ‘I don’t want to go!’

‘Come, Miss Jessie,’ said nurse. ‘Be a good child, now. You are so poorly you don’t know what to do. You will be much better in bed.’ And she took hold of Jessie’s hand.

Jessie pulled away from her, and struggled, and screamed, ‘I shan’t! I shan’t!’ but nurse caught her up, and carried her off.

Jessie did not leave her bedroom again for a good many days. After a day or two Alice joined her there, and Mary and Mildred came in before the end of the week. Nurse and mamma had enough to do; it was quite a hospital. Punny’s and Ferky’s turn came next, and last of all, Baby Bud. She was in her mother’s room, Punny and Ferky in the nursery, and the four little girls in their room; so mamma went from one to the other in turn, with her little comforts, and Edmund with stories. The sick chil-

dren could not settle which they liked best, the lemonade and fruit, or the tales.

It was curious to see how the children's characters showed themselves in their illness.

Jessie, the discontented, was more fretful than ever, and so cross that the others could hardly speak to her. She was ill longer than any of them, and both mamma and nurse thought her ill-temper and wilfulness were partly the cause of her getting well so slowly. She grumbled and whined at everything,—cried when she was hungry, and cried when she ate, because it hurt her to swallow,—cried to have a book to read, and then cried because reading gave her a headache,—cried to sit up, and cried because it tired her back,—and made more fuss over her medicine than all the rest put together. She certainly deserved the name of Whiney-Piney now.

Gentle little Alice was very different. She was always patient and cheerful, took her medicine quietly from nurse's hand, sat up directly and drank it without a word—I will not say without a face, for that would be expecting too much. Her little weak 'Thank you!' was always to be heard when anything was done for her, whether she liked it or not. For she remembered that everything that others did for her was done to make her better, and she felt grateful to them. If mamma brought in the lemonade it was—

‘Please give it to Milly first,’ or, ‘Jessie has been wanting some, mamma dear ; I’m so glad you’re come !’

Alice’s cough teased her dreadfully ; at night it was very troublesome, and kept her awake. Jessie was quite angry with poor Alice one night, and scolded her for disturbing her.

The four little beds were in a row ; Alice’s being next to Jessie’s, with a chair between. Alice’s only answer was—

‘I’m so sorry, dear !’ and then she put her head under the bed-clothes, and tried to smother her cough until she was nearly choking. After all her care, it burst out again louder than ever, and Jessie said crossly—

‘Bother ! how tiresome you are ! Just as I was going to sleep !’

‘I wish I could help it, indeed,’ said Alice. ‘It does hurt me so !’

Selfish Jessie did not care about this ; she only thought of her own discomfort at being roused up, and of how hard it was that she should be kept awake by Alice’s cough. She did not think anything of waking up Alice to reach her the lemonade when she was thirsty afterwards in the night, and Alice had just dropped asleep. How selfish we may be in those little ways, just for want of feeling for others !

The twins were not as ill as Jessie and Alice. They

had a slight attack, and were up first, though not allowed to go out of the room for fear of catching cold. They thought it rather good fun to be ill, and to be coddled up-stairs; and especially they liked having tea at the little round table by the fire, and carrying it to the two invalids on two little trays, and making their toast.

One very happy day came at last, when Violet, wrapped up in a large shawl, was carried into the little girls' room by Edmund, and laid on a sofa by the fire; and presently nurse and Sarah came in, each with another bundle in a blanket, out of which came Punny and Ferky, who were set down in their two little chairs on the other side. It was such a joyful meeting! One would have thought they had been parted for a year at least! Alice and Jessie were up and dressed, and they were all to have tea together. Edmund had promised to come in after tea, and tell them a story, to which they were all looking forward with delight.

'How pale you look, you poor Pun!' said Alice pityingly.

'And how thin Ferky's face has grown!' said Milly.

'How did you like having the measles?' asked Mary.

'Oh, very well!' answered Punny. 'Ferky and I played all sorts of games, you know. Of course we

weren't going to stop playing, just because we were ill.'

'What did you play?' asked Violet.

'Oh, Red Riding Hood and the wolf, for one thing,' said Ferky. 'Pun put on nurse's night-cap; didn't he look a Guy in it, just!'

They all laughed.

'He hasn't eaten you, though,' said Jessie.

'He thought I should disagree with him, you see,' said Ferky.

'Now tell us another,' said Milly. 'I wish we had thought of these plays. We've been so dull sometimes.'

'Well, then, we played at going to the dentist,' said Punny. 'That was such fun! I cribbed the sugar-tongs, nurse's old-fashioned silver ones, you know, when she wasn't looking; and how she did hunt about for them! We laughed so, we had got them under the pillow; and when she was gone into the other room to look for them, I began to be Mr. Kohls, and Ferky screamed so, that nurse came running in, and we popped under the clothes, forgetting all about the sugar-tongs, which I had dropped on the bed. Didn't we catch it! She called us Turks. I always know that she is very angry when she calls us that.'

'That's a very good play,' said Alice.

'How horrid it must be to pull out teeth really, though!' said Milly. 'I shouldn't like to be a tooth-man.'

‘Much worse to have them pulled out,’ said Violet.

Mary said nothing. If you could have looked at her, you would have seen that a bright colour had come up in her pale face, and she did not even seem amused. Would you like to know why? There was a stray tooth in that little mouth which had pushed itself up without being asked, where there was no room for it; and Mary had heard nurse say to her mamma in a low voice something about going to Mr. Kohls, one day just before she was ill. She had been in a fright ever since. If teeth would only go down again sometimes, for a change, instead of coming up! She quite dreaded to get well. So now you see why this history of Punny’s did not amuse her.

They had a very merry tea. Mamma had sent them up sponge-cakes and fruit; and they all agreed that it was rather a good thing to be ill.

By and bye Edmund’s voice was heard outside—

‘Open the door, open wide, that I may bring a bogie inside!’

There was a general rush to the door, and Edmund came in carrying a large box, which he put down in the middle of the room.

‘O Eddy, what have you got? What is it? Is it for us? Where did it come from?’ and many more such questions were showered on him, before he had time to answer.

‘All I know is, that it has just come, and is directed

to the Misses and Masters Douglas. Some good fairy, no doubt !

‘It is for us!’ they cried. ‘Open it quick, Eddy, please ! What *can* it be?’

‘Mamma is coming up,’ said Edmund. ‘We must wait for her. I will go and find a chisel and hammer.’

Oh, the joy, the impatience ! can you imagine what it was like, during those few minutes while Edmund was away ? They hardly knew how to wait.

They were all sitting on the floor round the box when he came back, with their mamma. She smiled to see their eagerness.

The lid was quickly raised, and there appeared a number of parcels of all sizes wrapped in paper, and directed to the different children, who all sat round watching with hungry eyes.

Mrs. Douglas took them out one by one, and gave them to the children. There was such a tearing off of papers, and such excitement !

‘Here is a great parcel for Alice,’ said Mrs. Douglas, lifting out a large box, and giving it to her.

‘O mamma ! what can it be ?’ she cried, delighted. ‘A set of real tea-things ! how lovely ! the very thing I wished for ! I shall be able to give tea-parties !’

All the others crowded round to admire the little cups and saucers, with their pretty blue and gold rims.

The next thing that came out was a paint-box for Jessie ; then two long parcels for the twins, in which

they found, to their great joy, two dolls, dressed exactly alike.

Now Punny and Ferky began to get rather excited ; their turn was coming. Punny's parcel came out first. It was a very small one ; and he looked the least bit disappointed to find in it only a little wooden frog, painted green.

'What is it for ?' he asked, turning it over and over.

'Let me look,' said his mamma.

She took it, and bent back a spring underneath it, then set it on the floor by Punny.

'Watch it,' she said.

He stooped down over it, when all of a sudden it hopped up right in his face, and he screamed, 'It's alive!'

The children went into fits of laughter.

'Well done, Lion-heart !' cried Ferky, as soon as he could speak.

'Here's yours, Ferky,' said his mamma, handing him a square parcel. It turned out to be a box, which fastened with a little wire hook, rather tightly. Ferky opened it at last with a jerk ; back flew the lid, and up sprung into his face a little black grinning monkey, covered with hair. The valiant Ferky shrieked, and threw it down ; while all the children cried out, amid screams of laughter—

'Well done, Lion-heart !'

'The little Violet, now ! Last, but not least !' said

Edmund. All the rest looked eagerly ; there was not one who did not wish Baby Bud's to be the best. It was a beautiful book of Fairy tales, with many pictures.

‘The thing I like best of all!’ she said joyfully. ‘This will be a treat for a long time to come. To us all!’ she added ; ‘for I can read them out to you!’

‘I wish,’ said Alice, ‘we knew who our good fairy was, that we might thank her!’

Mamma smiled.

‘It is mamma!’ cried Violet.

‘Mamma! mamma! mamma is our good fairy!’ cried all the children, rushing upon her, and overpowering her with kisses.

Then they sang all together, led on by Punny and Ferky—

‘Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!

Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!

Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! O what a good mamma!

We are so very happy,

We are so very happy,

We are so very happy, we don't know what to do!’



CHAPTER IX.

GOING TO THE SEA.

WE'RE going to the sea! we're all going to the sea!' cried Alice, flying into her mamma's room to tell Violet the joyful news.

'Are we?' and Violet's pale face even got a little colour in it. 'I am so glad! I've never seen the sea.'

'You will like it so much! And the sands! and the shells! and the clambering on the rocks! and the donkey-rides!' Violet looked sad.—'Ah! I quite forgot you, dear! I am so sorry. You can't climb on the rocks, or ride, or pick up shells, poor Baby Bud! Never mind! I'll give you all I can get, and I'll sit by you on the sands when the others are riding. You'll be able to lie there and watch the waves, you know!'

'Are they very grand?' asked Violet.

'O yes! the sea goes sucking, sucking back, and

then it curls up in a great roll, and dashes down, and the wave comes after you ever so fast to catch your feet, and we run away from it as if we were running from a lion ; but if we're not very quick it catches us, and we scream out !'

'What fun it must be !' said Violet sorrowfully. 'I wish I could do that !'

'You shan't make my Baby Bud sad ! Get along !' cried Edmund, who had heard her last words as he came in. 'She shall have as much fun as all the rest of them put together, she shall !' and he took her up on his lap tenderly, and kissed her. She wound her arms round his neck, and hid her face on his shoulder, and he could hear that she was crying.

'What is it, my Bud ?' asked Edmund.

'O nothing, nothing !'

'Yes, it is something, and I think I can tell what it is,' said Edmund. 'My little Bud is sad because she can't run about, and do as the others do. Isn't that it ?'

'I didn't mean to cry, Eddy dear,' said Violet, trying to restrain herself. 'But it's very hard sometimes ; I get so tired of lying here.'

'I know you must, darling,' said Edmund, with a sigh. 'I only wish I could bear it for you.'

'I shouldn't like that,' said Violet. 'O no ! It is only just now and then that I mind a little, and wish I could have some fun like the others. But I know

it can't be, and I'm not going to fret. I shall be very happy lying on the sands and watching the waves, Eddy dear.'

Edmund kissed the little gentle patient face, and could hardly keep from crying himself.

'Let me see,' he said. 'There will be many little pleasures for my dear Bud. We will get her a nice easy donkey-carriage, in which she can lie and go on the sands, and she shall have her own little bucket and shell-basket, and we'll make a collection of shells and sea-weeds, and find out all their names in a book which I have ; and we'll get anemones and all sorts of queer things that live in the sea, and keep them in a glass bowl. And you and I will put our shells and pretty things together, my Bud, and I will make a tray for them, with little divisions for each sort, and we will put pink and white wool in the divisions for the shells to lie upon. Won't that be nice ?'

'O yes !' cried Violet, brightening up. 'Will you make the tray before we go, so that we may have it all ready ?'

'I'll begin it to-day,' said Edmund. 'I'll go down to Stevens, and get him to give me the wood.'

Edmund was a good hand at carpentering, and before the end of the week he had made a capital tray, with little square divisions in it of different sizes for the shells. Violet was delighted with it.

The day came at last. Great was the glee and

excitement of the children on the journey, and great the fun of having a pic-nic dinner in the railway carriage. Violet was laid on one of the soft cushioned seats, with some pillows, which made it an easy bed for her, and Punny and Ferky had to sit on two carpet-bags on the floor of the carriage, and were constantly tumbling over, till at last papa was obliged to threaten to put them under the seat if they were so unruly.

Violet had never travelled before, and she was greatly amused.

‘The country is running away!’ she exclaimed, as the train went swiftly on. ‘Look! look! trees, hedges, fields, how fast they go!’

Presently they came to a deep cutting, and the sky could no longer be seen from the windows. Violet’s face grew paler.

‘Are we going into the heart of the earth?’ she asked, as the train entered the tunnel.

‘You goose, to be frightened!’ exclaimed Punny. ‘I’m not a bit! I like tunnels!’ and he began jumping about on his carpet-bag, and rolled over.

‘Out of the way, you naughty boy!’ cried Jessie. ‘Mamma, he’s dragged my doll out of my lap, and put her in under the seat, and he’ll squash her, I know he will!’

‘Punny, you horror! you’re on my toes!’ cried Mary.

‘O Punny! *and* Ferky! Papa, they’re fighting!’ cried Mildred.

Punny was caught and imprisoned in the corner behind papa’s seat, where he had to stay for a long time. As for Ferky, mamma took him upon her knee, as that was the only place where he was ever known to be quiet for more than five minutes together.

And now they were out of the tunnel, and Violet had her first sight of the sea.

‘It *is* grand!’ she cried, as she saw the white foaming waves dashing up against the rocks. ‘Oh, Eddy! I love it!’

Seaview House, to which they were going, was very near the beach, facing the sea. It had green verandas running all round it, to keep out the sun, and a bright little garden in front, the beds of which were bordered with large shining white pebbles from the beach.

The instant the children were out of the carriage, it was—

‘Papa! mamma! may we go on the sands?’

‘Till tea-time,’ was the answer, and off scampered the delighted ones, followed by nurse, full of fears for the safety of Punny and Ferky.

Papa carried Violet in, Edmund coming after with her pillows. Very refreshing it was, after the long shaky journey, to lie on the sofa by the open window, and hear the murmur of the waves.

‘Edmund dear, don’t stay in for me. I know you want to be out scrambling with the rest,’ said Violet, as Edmund seated himself on the end of the sofa. ‘Do go.’

‘No, my Bud, I am going to sit here now. I’ll go out by and bye when you’re in bed.’

‘I shall go to bed after tea, for I am very tired,’ said Violet. ‘How nice it is here! I never thought it was so nice! What a lot of little children there are on the sands! It will be such fun watching them play! I shall make stories to myself about them, as I lie on the beach. I see two that I like very much already; they’re coming this way—going in to their tea, I suppose. Is that a lady or a nurse with them, I wonder? I think it’s a lady, because she looks nice. Haven’t they got dear little faces, Eddy! Do look! And their spades and buckets too, and great flappy hats. I shall call them “the two little Flappys.” They are my first children in this new place.’

Violet had a way of calling all things she took a fancy to, her ‘children.’ In the garden, at home, where she spent so many hours, some of her favourite flowers were her ‘children.’ Her canary, the tame rabbits, and her pets among the chickens, were her ‘children.’ So were some caterpillars which she kept in a bottle, to see them change into chrysalises. So were two or three of the little children at the village

school, who sometimes came up to the house with a bunch of the first primroses or blue-bells for 'the dear little sick lady.'

Violet had almost as much to say to nurse, when she was being put to bed, as the others, who came in wild with excitement, and with handfuls of treasures from the sands. The last thing she said to Edmund when he kissed her, after she was in bed, was—

'I hope I shall see my two little Flappys to-morrow !'





CHAPTER X.

THE TWO LITTLE FLAPPYS.

THERE they are! I see them!' cried Violet excitedly, as Edmund drew up her donkey-chair under the shade of a high rock, where she could have a good view of the sands.

'Who, darling?' asked her mamma.

'My little Flappys, mamma!'

'Who are your little Flappys?' asked mamma.

'Those two little girls down by the water, with large flapping hats. Mamma, I chose them for my own last night. I like their faces so.'

'I see,' said mamma; and she took out her work, and seated herself on the rock by Violet.

'I am going to hunt for sea treasures, Bud,' said Edmund, who had already been to the shop to buy her a little green bucket and a sand-basket.

He began clambering about the rocks, and presently cried, 'Oh, here is a splendid anemone. I am sure it's

what they call a "Crass," such a thick horned creature, in this pool! O Bud! such a beauty! with rose-coloured eyes!

'How can you get it?' asked Violet eagerly. 'I want to see it so!'

'I must try and take it up with the stone it is sticking on,' said Edmund; 'I was reading about these sea-flowers in the book I told you I had, called "Common Objects of the Sea-shore," and it says that if the anemone is hurt in being taken up, it will not live.'

'Oh do be careful!' cried Violet.

'An ivory paper-knife is a good thing,' said her mamma, 'if you cannot get away the piece of rock. There is one on the table indoors.'

Edmund ran in to fetch it, and soon succeeded in taking up the 'Crass,' which he placed gently on some pebbles in Violet's bucket.

'Now I must get a bit of live sea-weed, growing on a stone, and some sea-water, or it will die. The live sea-weed makes fresh air for it in the water—isn't that funny? I learnt all about the creatures while you were asleep, Bud, last night.'

'But I don't think this is so very beautiful,' said Violet, in rather a disappointed tone, as she gazed at the greenish flabby lump, something like a ripe fig, which lay at the bottom of her bucket.

'That is because it is all closed up,' said Edmund,

‘They always do that when they are taken off the rock. It will open out again presently like a beautiful flower; and this one has a regular face in the middle—nose, mouth, and two red eyes.’

‘How funny!’ said Violet. ‘This shall be another of my children, mamma, and I shall call her Rose.—Look, mamma! my two little Flappys are coming this way with their mamma, or aunt, or governess, I wonder which, now! I think I shall say that she is their aunt. They are looking at me. I daresay they wonder why I am lying on this little carriage. There they come, nearer and nearer. I like the face of that little one, with the long pale hair. Look, mamma, the aunt is sitting down under that rock near us. She is saying, “My dears, go and play while I read, and don’t disturb me.” I am sure that is what she says, for they are going a little way from her. Oh, they are coming this way! how nice! now I shall hear what they call each other.’

Violet lay watching her little Flappys intently. The little Flappys looked wistfully at her, and drew nearer and nearer. The face of the smallest little Flappy looked full of pity. Presently the elder one said to her, in a low voice—

‘May, dear, we mustn’t stare so. It’s not kind.’

‘You leave off first, and then I will,’ was the answer, ‘for you’re the eldest.’

‘Therefore I ought to have the longest look,’ said

the other little Flappy, laughing. 'Let us come and climb on that rock, and perhaps we shall hear what the poor sick little girl's name is. I should like to know.'

'I wonder what is the matter with her!' said May. 'I wish I could give her all my shells.'

Violet lost sight of her little Flappys behind the rock. By and by she was startled by hearing one of them cry out, close to her—

'O Gerty! I've found a hermit-crab!'

'Have you?' cried Gerty. 'Oh May dear, how nice! Let us run and show it to Aunt Emmie!'

'It *is* an aunt!' whispered Violet to her mamma, in delight. 'And their names are Gerty and May. How nice! What pretty names! I wish I could see a hermit-crab!' she added out loud.

Gerty and May heard these last words as they were getting down off the rock. They looked at one another—

'Shall we?' whispered May.

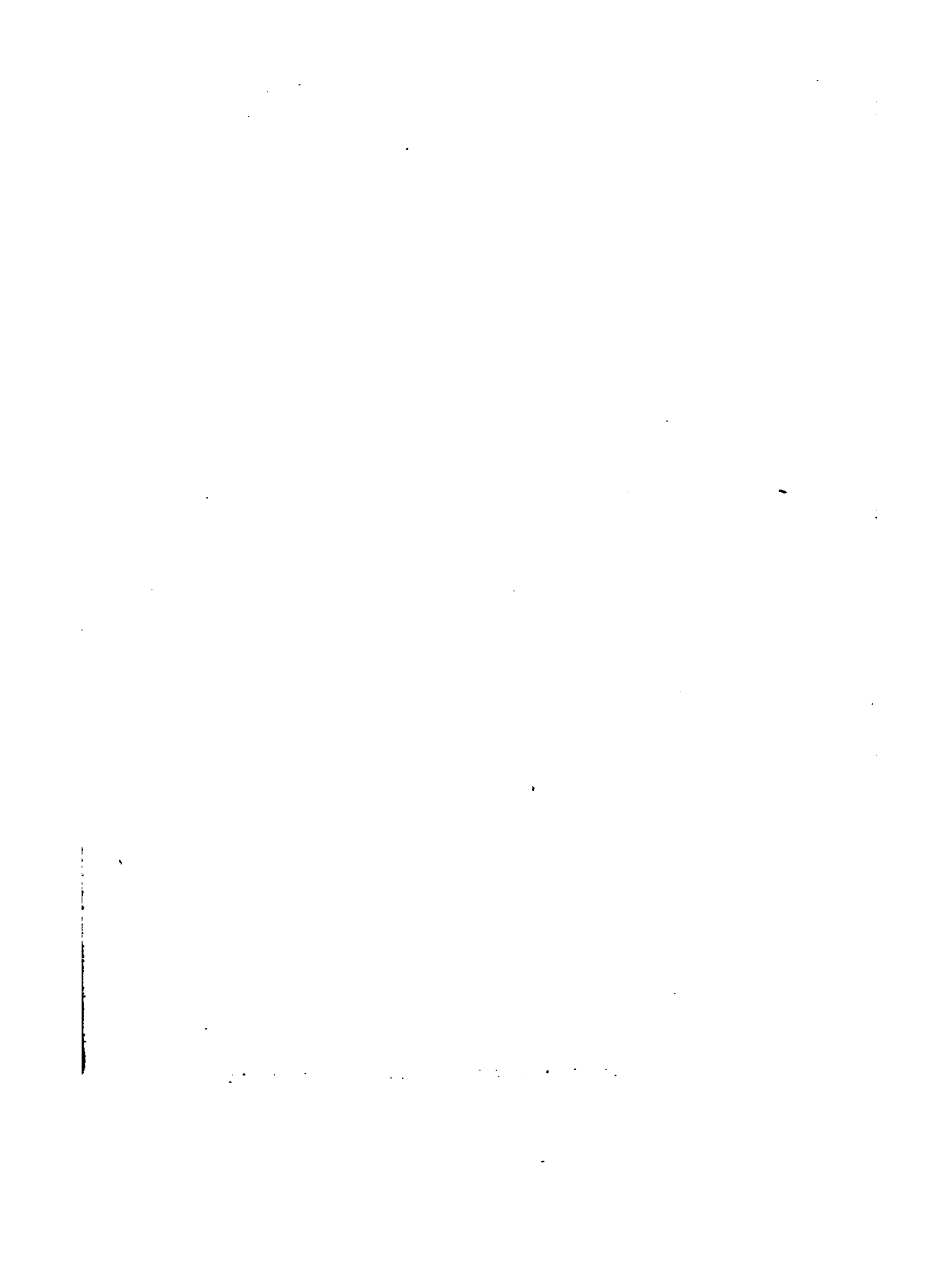
'Let us ask Aunt Emmie first,' answered Gerty.

'They are gone to show their hermit-crab to their aunt,' said Violet. 'How kindly she looks at them! Now she nods her head. She is saying, "Yes, my dears, very pretty." Now they are coming back this way—to find another hermit-crab, I suppose. Oh, look, mamma, I think they are coming to speak to me. They look so shy! My dear little Flappys!'

Gerty and May drew near, rather slowly and shyly,



GERTY OFFERING TO SHOW VIOLET THE HERMIT CRAB.—PAGE 83.



looking up at Violet with a smile, and holding out the bucket towards her.

Violet smiled at them again.

‘Would you like to see our hermit-crab?’ asked Gerty kindly.

‘Yes, very much, thank you!’ said Violet. Gerty held it up to her, and May stood by and took hold of one of Violet’s little thin white hands, and stroked it tenderly. She felt so sorry for the poor little girl who could not run about on the sands. She and Gerty had settled between them as they came back that they would offer her their treasure.

Violet was very much amused at the fierce antics of the little soldier-crab, as he darted his claws out of the big whelk-shell in which he had taken up his abode, and seemed to look about angrily for some foe.

‘Would you like to keep him?’ asked May, when the little girls had laughed together, and begun to feel rather less shy.

‘O thank you!’ said Violet. ‘How kind you are! It will amuse me so to watch him!’

‘Are you always ill?’ whispered May to her.

‘Yes,’ said Violet.

‘How sad for you!’ said May. ‘Would you like to see my best shells? I keep them in a drawer at home. I will bring them to show you if you like.’

‘I should like very much. Where do you live?’ asked Violet.

'At "The Cottage," that little house near the church, do you see, up there on the hill?' said Gerty. 'We live with Aunt Emmie.'

'That's Aunt Emmie by the rock,' said May, pointing.

'She's beckoning to us to come,' said Gerty. 'Goodbye.'

'Goodbye,' said Violet. 'Will you come and speak to me another day?'

'If we may,' and Gerty and May ran to their aunt, and went away with her.

Edmund now came back, surrounded by the tribe of children, all laden with shells, sea-weeds, sea-eggs, and little crabs and shrimps, with which last Punny and Ferky tormented their sisters, making them crawl and jump about them, and very naughtily enjoying their little shrieks and screams. Baby Bud was the only one who was free from these teasing ways. Punny and Ferky, dearly as they loved mischief, never thought of plaguing *her*, and would have been very angry with any one who dared to do so. Now the children crowded round Violet, offering her the best of their newly-found treasures.

'Choose what you like, Baby Bud dear, from mine!'

'And mine!'

'And mine!'

'Baby Bud, you must have this lovely pair!'

‘And this fan, Baby Bud!’

‘And these dear little dinky shells! I picked them up on purpose for you!’

Jessie was the only one whose voice was not heard.

How was that? Her bucket was full of treasures. I am afraid she was selfish, poor little girl. She could not make up her mind to part with them. They did not seem to give her pleasure, however. She grumbled all the way home, because it was so hot, and because her boot pinched her, and because she couldn’t stay out longer, and because Ferky put a crab on her neck, and because Punny laughed at her for being cross. She certainly was the least happy of them all; and that is generally the reward of selfishness.

‘Baby Bud, what *do* you think! mamma has found out that she knows the aunt of your two little Flappys! She saw her name on the list in the paper at the library. “Miss Tudor, The Cottage,” and she is sure it is the same she was at school with, because her name is Emily—“Aunt Emmie,” you know. And she is going to see her this afternoon, so we shall know the little Flappys, and be able to play with them!’

Alice stopped, quite out of breath with her news.

‘How nice!’ said Violet. ‘Do you know, Ally, I took them for my children the very day we came here? I like them so much!’

'Mamma says she will take you in the carriage, if you like, Baby Bud,' said Alice, who had given up the pleasure of a drive, which had been offered her, in order that Baby Bud might go; for as she would have to lie upon the seat, there would be no room for any one else on it.

'I wanted to go!' exclaimed Jessie, who was washing her shells at the table. 'It's my turn! mamma said I should go with her next time!'

Alice went up to Jessie, and whispered to her—

'Mamma said Violet could go if you and I gave up, and I was sure you would.'

'I can't,' said Jessie; 'it's not fair!'

Violet heard, and though she would have liked extremely to see where Gerty and May lived, she made up her mind at once that she would not go, but would let Jessie and Alice have the pleasure.

'Jessie dear,' she said, 'I am going on the beach with Edmund this afternoon, and you and Alice can go in the carriage with mamma. I should like you to go and see the little Flappys.'

'It is my turn,' said Jessie ungraciously.

'I know,' said Violet. 'I should not be happy to take it from you, so run and get ready, dear, and I'll wipe your shells for you, if you'll put them by me.'

I cannot help thinking that Jessie must have felt rather ashamed. She gave Violet a kiss as she put the basin and towel on the table by her sofa, and said—

‘How kind you are!’ and then ran away to dress.

‘Not ready, Baby Bud! how is that?’ asked Edmund, as the carriage stood at the door, and he came in to carry her to it.

If Violet had been like *some* little children, she would have answered—

‘Because Jessie is so cross and selfish, and she wants to go herself instead of me.’ But Baby Bud only said—

‘I want you to take me on the sands, Eddy dear. Will you?’

‘Would you rather?’ asked Edmund.

‘Yes, to-day,’ said Violet.

‘I’ll go and see after your chariot at once, then,’ said Edmund. He ran off, and presently returned with the donkey-carriage, and they went down to the sands together.

Violet was no sooner placed in her favourite corner under the rock, than she saw the little Flappys coming towards her. This time they did not come shyly; they ran, May swinging a little bag to and fro, and Gerty carrying a beautiful wax doll. Their nurse Lettice was behind; she seated herself under the rock a little way off, and took out her work.

‘Here are your Flappers, as you call them,’ said Edmund. ‘I shall go and see if I can find some more anemones for your bowl, Baby Bud.’

‘Do try and get me a white one,’ said Violet.

‘All right,’ answered Edmund.

May had picked out all the prettiest and rarest of her shells, and put them in her bag, to offer to the ‘poor little sick child,’ whose pale face moved her heart.

‘Auntie said I might give them to you,’ she whispered, as she poured them out into Violet’s lap.’

‘This is a whelk, and this is a razor shell, and this is a cowrie, and these are periwinkles,’ said Gerty, who was a little proud of knowing all the names. ‘And these dinky ones we call the little babies, and the cockles are the nurses, who have to carry them.’ May went on, ‘And we make stories about naughty little boys and girls and little fairies, with them.’

‘Do you?’ said Violet. ‘That is just what I do! I make stories about my anemones too. It is so funny how they open and shut, and swell themselves out. When they puff out their skins I say they are in a bad temper.’

May laughed. ‘How many have you?’ asked Gerty.

‘Seven,’ said Violet. ‘They have all got names.’

‘Tell us their names,’ said May.

‘Well, first, Sunny, because he has rays and a sort of face, as you see the sun drawn in pictures; and Pouter, because he swells out his skin so often—he’s the naughtiest of them all. Buffy is another—she’s a dear little gentle one, all buff colour, and her horns

are like feathers. Then there's Mossy, because she's green ; and Bogie, big and greedy ; and Rose, she has rose-coloured tips ; and then there's Squirt—he's a very lively one. We called him Squirt because when he was taken off the rock he actually squirted water up out of his horns into Eddy's face !

Gerty and May laughed very much at this.

'Is Eddy your brother ?' asked Gerty.

'Yes, and Punny and Ferky too,' said Violet.

'We have a little brother,' said May, 'but we've never seen him.'

'Never seen him !' exclaimed Violet. 'Why ?'

'Because he's in India,' said Gerty ; 'and our papa and mamma are there too.'

'What is his name ?' asked Violet.

'Totty,' said May. 'He's such a dear.'

'We've got a picture of him on a rocking-horse, which papa sent us. And we have a little sister there too. Some day they'll come home to us.'

'O dear ! I wish that day would come !' said Gerty.

'Well,' said Violet gaily, 'you see we're equal. I've got a papa and mamma to live with me, but I'm always ill ; and you're well and strong, but you've no papa and mamma to live with you.'

'I don't think we *are* equal,' said Gerty thoughtfully. 'We're very happy with Aunt Emmie ; now you can't be happy to be always ill.'

'Yes I can,' said Violet. 'Sometimes I feel very sorry

that I can't run about, just for a little ; but that is only when I forget.'

'Forget what ?' asked May.

'That God wishes me to be as I am,' replied Violet, 'or else it wouldn't be. Mamma says so.'

The little girls were silent, and looked grave.

'Yes,' said May. 'Aunt Emmie says that when we are ill, it is because God loves us. When I had the scarlatina she said it,' said May. 'I used to get so tired, I could do nothing but cry. And then auntie used to come and cuddle me up in her lap, and tell me nice little comforty stories.'

'Nothing *is* such a comfort as a story, I think!' said Violet.





CHAPTER XI.

THE DESERT ISLAND.

WHERE are Master Punny and Master Ferky?' asked nurse, putting her head in at the door, just before the children's dinner-time.

'I thought they came in a little while ago,' said Mrs. Douglas.

'I heard them up-stairs, I am sure,' said Violet. 'And they seemed to be making a great rummage about a quarter of an hour ago.'

'I've been looking high and low for them, ma'am,' said nurse; 'and they are nowhere to be found. They are at some of their tricks again.'

'They ought not to play you such tricks as these,' said Mrs. Douglas. 'I really must speak to them severely.'

'I shall be very glad if you will, indeed, ma'am,' said nurse; 'for they have led me such a life with their freaks since we came here: what with tumbling

into the sea, and swarming up the rocks in places where there is hardly room for a crow to perch—they do terrify me out of my very senses ; and the last new boots Master Ferky had are quite ruined, ma'am.'

'Very well, nurse, send them to me when you find them,' said the mamma.

The one o'clock dinner-bell rang, and all the children assembled except Punny and Ferky.

'Where can they be?' was whispered round the table.

Mamma looked grave and displeased.

'Do any of you know where they are?' she asked.

Alice coloured up. 'I don't exactly know, but I think—' she said, and stopped.

'What do you think?' asked mamma.

'I think they are on a desert island, mamma,' said Alice. 'Please don't be angry with them!'

Mamma did not look angry ; she was smiling. So Alice went on—

'They were planning to be Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday,' said she. 'And they came in and got a carpet-bag, and went away among the rocks ; but they didn't mean to be naughty, I'm sure, for they were *so* happy about it, and they don't know that it's dinner-time very likely.'

'They will soon find that out,' said Edmund, 'if they are as hungry as I am. Doesn't this air just give me an appetite!'

‘I think, Edmund,’ said Mrs. Douglas, ‘that you had better go down to the beach as soon as you have finished, and see if you can find the boys. It is very thoughtless of them.’

‘I’ll go now, mother dear, if you like,’ said Edmund, laying down his knife and fork.

‘O no, don’t hurry. They can very well wait for their dinner.’

‘Cook,’ said Sarah, going into the kitchen about this time, ‘have you had the loaf out of nurse’s cupboard?’

‘Not I, indeed,’ answered the cook, who was bustling about, getting her puddings ready to go up. ‘I never goes near your cupboard, so don’t come bothering of me when I’m so busy.’

‘The loaf’s gone, then, and so is our cheese,’ said Sarah. ‘And nurse is in a pretty way about it!’

‘It’s those boys, depend upon it,’ said cook. ‘I never saw such *mischeevious* monkeys in all my days. What do you think they went and did this morning? Put one of these horrid sea-spiders all alive into one of my vegetable dishes, and when I come to lift the cover off in a hurry, you know, to put my potatoes in, if the great ugly creature didn’t give a flink, and nearly frighten the life out of me! There! it did!’

And with that cook carried off her puddings.

Nurse meanwhile had been making fresh discoveries in her cupboard; her salt-cellar was upset,

and Ferky's white china mug, and a knife and plate, were missing from it. On going into the next room she saw that it was in great disorder—drawers and closets open, boots and clothes on the floor, and playthings scattered about. What could it all mean? She had not heard about the desert island, or perhaps she might have guessed, what was really the case, that Punny and Ferky had been packing up to go there!

'Are the young gentlemen in the dining-room?' she asked of Sarah, who was helping to wait.

'No,' was the answer. 'Master Edmund is now going down to the beach to seek for them. Your dinner's coming up, nurse, directly.'

'I can't think about dinner till I know where they are,' said nurse. 'I've only just come up from the sands, and I don't see them anywhere there.'

'Miss Alice said as they were on a *dessert high-land*,' replied Sarah. 'Perhaps she meant up a-top of the cliffs—very dangerous if they are.'

'How ignorant of you, Sarah, to talk like that!' answered nurse. 'A *high-land*, child, means a piece of land in the middle of the water, rising high out of it like—'

'Oh, I see,' answered Sarah. 'How hot and tired you look! Do have your dinner first, before you go.'

'No, no,' said nurse, 'I can't rest,' and off she set o the beach again, to hunt for the little good-for-

nothings, who meanwhile were enjoying themselves mightily on a rock that stood out a little way in the sea, as nurse had described, and to which they had waded with their knickerbockers tucked up. It did not occur to them that this rock was never to be seen when the tide was in, and that before long it would be covered by the waves. They were so full of their new idea about Robinson Crusoe that all else was forgotten. A small black carpet-bag, found by Ferky in the nursery closet, came just handy, as he said, to pack ; and into it went the loaf, cheese, cup, plate, and knife, together with a box of matches, a brush and comb, and two little night-gowns, a game of Snap to pass the time, a hammer and some nails to build with, and a small blanket from one of the little beds. It would not hold any more, and Punny, who was the man Friday, and therefore had to carry it, found it as much as he could lug along.

They had chosen the dinner hour as being the time best suited for them to make their escape, and as the tide was going out, there was just water enough to make it an adventure to wade over to the desert island.

Desert it was truly, being only a bare rock with ledges. To the further side of this they scrambled, out of sight of any one on the beach, and sat, facing the sea, trying to imagine themselves shipwrecked.

'Yes, but—one can't cook crabs with matches,' said Friday.

'It's a bad job,' replied Robinson. 'I made sure we should be able to get sticks to cook our meat.'

'On a sea-weedy rock?' asked Friday.

'Don't be stupid! You know it's a desert island!' returned Robinson.

There was a pause, during which Crusoe and his man Friday looked out at the sea, and wished for their dinner. It began to rain. Large drops fell upon the desert island, and the little boys felt very wretched.

'I don't think I care so much for this play after all,' said Punny at last.

'Neither do I,' replied Ferky. 'I believe there's going to be a thunderstorm.'

Black threatening clouds had been gathering for some time over their heads, and now, as Ferky finished speaking, there came a flash of lightning, followed by a loud clap of thunder.

The little boys sprang up, terrified, and fled from the rock, homewards. Happily for them, the tide had only just turned, or they would have found it no easy matter to get back to the beach; as it was, they sprang into the water without a thought of boots, stockings, or knickerbockers, leaving the carpet-bag and its contents behind in their fright. Splash,

splash, plunge, dash, headlong on they went, not even seeing Edmund before them, in their haste, until they tumbled up against him.

‘Here you are, are you?’ he exclaimed, sternly. ‘Where have you been?’

‘On a desert island,’ said Ferky. ‘But, O Eddy, take us home safe, please! We’re so frightened!’

Flash after flash came, peal after peal of thunder, and the rain poured down in torrents, as they hurried homewards, a hand of each in Edmund’s. Nothing more was said by either of the culprits, until they stood, dripping like waterspouts, before mamma and nurse.

‘We are very sorry!’ they cried then. ‘We will never play Robinson Crusoe again!’

Of course they were put to bed directly, and there we will leave them. That was generally the end of Punny’s and Ferky’s adventures, and is really the only safe place for little boys.





CHAPTER XII.

THE PICNIC.

WHEN Violet went in-doors, Jessie and Alice came running to her to tell her the joyful news that they were all going for a picnic with Miss Tudor, and Gerty and May, the next day.

‘She *is* mamma’s friend, and she was so glad to see her! and we are going in the steamer to Walden Island, and we are to have dinner and tea there. Won’t it be delightful!’

Baby Bud thought it would, indeed.

‘We didn’t see the little Flappys, for they were out,’ said Jessie, ‘and I’m sorry for that. They have rabbits and pigeons, and all kinds of things—a great dog, and a donkey. The aunt said we should see them all some day when Gerty and May were at home to show them to us.’

‘They were on the beach with me,’ said Violet. ‘See : shells they gave me! Aren’t they beauties!’

‘Oh, what loves! I haven’t any like this, nor this!’ said Jessie eagerly.

‘Take any you like, dear,’ said Violet.

On which Jessie picked out the best and prettiest of them all, and saying, ‘Thank you, dear Baby Bud,’ went away to put them with her own private store, which she kept in a drawer up-stairs.

Alice stood by, looking quite angry. ‘Bud,’ she said, ‘she’s taken all the best ones!’

‘I know,’ replied Violet.

‘How *can* you be so quiet about it!’

‘Because of something mamma told me on Sunday,’ said Violet, hesitating.

‘What was that?’ asked Alice.

‘She said they were the words of the Lord Jesus; “*It is more blessed to give than to receive,*” said Violet.

‘I have been thinking about it ever since. I have so few ways in which I can give others pleasure. It seems to me that I only *receive*.’

‘And of course you ought to,’ said Alice. ‘You’re the sick one. We ought all to give to you, darling.’

‘No,’ said Violet. ‘Mamma said there was great danger of sick people thinking that, and growing selfish. I don’t want to be selfish! It’s so horrid to be selfish!’ The tears stood in her eyes.

‘I am sure you are not, then, dear Bud,’ said Alice, kissing her. ‘But Jessie is.’

‘Never mind that,’ said Violet. ‘She’ll feel differently some day.’

Alice could not help thinking that if anything would teach Jessie to 'feel differently,' it ought to be Baby Bud's unselfishness.

The next morning was bright and pleasant, with a nice cool breeze—just the very day for a picnic. The children thought of nothing else from the time they got up, I believe.

Sundry bags and baskets were packed early by nurse and cook, and stood ready in the passage.

About eleven o'clock Aunt Emmie arrived with the little Flappys, and two other little girls, the daughters of the clergyman, whose names were Alice and Tiny. They were the favourite playfellows of Gerty and May. The children soon made friends with them, while Gerty and May posted themselves by Violet's sofa, and were introduced to her anemones. Aunt Emmie came to look at them too, and kissed Violet tenderly, and Violet thought she had never seen a sweeter face, or kinder eyes.

'They are like dove's eyes,' she said afterwards to May.

The walking party set off first, with papa, to go down to the steamer. Mamma and Violet, with Edmund, followed in the carriage. A little light moveable chair, which could unfold, and become a bed, had been made for Violet, and was very useful at such times as this. Edmund arranged it, with its cushions, on the deck of the steamer, and Baby Bud

lay comfortably on it, enjoying the new pleasure of being on the sea.

In about twenty minutes they reached Walden Island, one side of which sloped down to the water, green and inviting, a kind of moorland, covered with bushes and bracken, and here and there turfy hollows, the largest of which was chosen for their dining-room.

Nurse and Edmund dragged the hampers there, and began to unpack. The children all wanted to help, but mamma said she feared so many cooks would spoil the pie, and so she, and papa, and Aunt Emmie, with the tribe, set off to make a journey round the island, as Violet begged that no one would stay with her, for she should be quite amused with seeing the dinner laid out. Edmund declared that nurse could not get on without him, however, and stayed behind. When the others came back, hot and hungry, they found dinner all ready for them, and Edmund lying on the grass by Violet, telling her a story.

‘Oh, you *should* have come to the other side, Edmund,’ cried Mildred; ‘there’s such a beautiful cliff there, just like a wall, and a dear little beach under it—’

‘And a cave, a real cave!’ cried Punny and Ferky together. ‘It goes far into the rock!’

‘And there are gulls and puffins,’ said Mary.

'Punny caught hold of a puffin, and it gave him such a bite!'

'That was because Punny did not mind what he was told,' said papa.

'I wish I could see the puffins and the cave!' said Violet.

'You shall, my little Bud,' said her papa. 'I will carry you round there after dinner, for it will be nice and shady there by that time.'

Gerty and May had found some pretty flowers on the cliff, which they brought to Violet.

The dinner was a very merry one. Gerty and May sat one on each side of Violet, and waited on her.

Punny and Ferky, as usual, were like bits of quicksilver, now at this corner, now at that, upsetting the salt-cellar into the sugar, and spilling their lemonade into their neighbours' plates. Edmund said he thought they ought to be corked up in two of the empty bottles.

'Wouldn't we make the corks pop, that's all!' said Punny.

After dinner, Violet's chair was taken by Edmund to the other side of the island, papa carrying Bud round as he had promised. She enjoyed it very much, but was glad to be laid down at last in the cool, and to find Edmund waiting for her. He had chosen a nice shady corner just outside the cave for her chair, and she was greatly amused to see some

eyes peering out of the shawl she used for her feet. The shawl was rolled round the creature, and its face, peeping out, looked so funny!

‘What is it, Eddy dear?’ she cried.

‘A puffin,’ said Edmund. ‘Great, stupid bird, there it sat, staring at me, saying, “Come, take me,” till I came and caught it! I took good care, though, to guard against being bitten, as Punny was, you see.’

‘I wonder how he likes being wrapped up in a shawl!’ said Violet. ‘Poor Puffy!’ and she stroked its head.

‘Take care, he’ll snap at you!’ said Edmund, not a minute too soon, for Mr. Puffin had bitten a piece out of the shawl. ‘We had better let him go.’ So Puffin took flight, seeming very glad to be undressed again.

Meanwhile the rest of the party were scrambling about the island, keeping mamma in a fever of anxiety lest any of them should slip into the water or fall down the rocks. Papa said he must go and join them, to keep an eye on Punny and Ferky, who were sure to be in every kind of mischief.

‘Edmund, dear, do go and amuse yourself with the others,’ said Violet, ‘I can’t bear to keep you. I have a book.’

‘No, dear Bud, it’s too hot. I would rather lie here; I like the quiet.’

‘So do I,’ said Violet; ‘it’s very peaceful.’ Then they were both silent for a long time, looking out

upon the wide expanse of sea, bounded by the blue sky, and listening to the gentle splash of the ripples on the beach.

Presently Violet said, 'How quick the time does pass! Every day brings us nearer and nearer to the End. It's a very happy thing to be getting nearer and nearer to God!'

'It is indeed, Bud,' said Edmund; 'if we are getting ready to live with Him.'

'I hope I am,' said Violet; 'but I feel very impatient sometimes, you know,' she added sorrowfully.

Edmund thought that if this was all his little Bud had to grieve over, it was not much. She was so seldom impatient at all, and never cross with any one. He only wished he was as good. But he did not say so. He lay thinking, and digging a great hole in the shingle with his heels as he lay.

At last Violet raised her head and looked round her.

'How lovely it is here!' she said. 'But where are all the little rocks gone?'

'What little rocks?' asked Edmund, raising himself lazily on his elbow.

'Those little rocks at the side, where papa brought me round. Eddy! what's the matter?'

All the colour had gone out of Edmund's face.

'I say!' he exclaimed, 'the tide's coming in like a race-horse!'

He sprang up, and began looking all round the

little cove in which they were. The low rocks on each side were already covered, and the cliff rose straight and high 'like a wall,' as Mildred had said, behind. The way by which they had come was all under water.

'Oh, Eddy! Eddy! how dreadful!' cried Violet. 'We shall be drowned!' and she began to cry.

Edmund put his arms round her and kissed her. 'Bud, darling, be brave!' His voice was trembling very much. 'I will go and see if it is possible to wade over the rocks.'

He ran first to one side, and then to the other to see, but the water was already too deep. He came back looking very grave, and knelt down by Violet.

'Bud, dear, there is no way out,' he said.

'Oh, what *shall* we do?' cried Violet, clinging to him. 'What *shall* we do?'

'I will climb up as far as I can, and shout,' said Edmund. 'Perhaps some of them will hear us.'

He scrambled up to the top of the highest rock within reach, and called, and shouted, and screamed 'Help! Help!' at the top of his voice, till he was quite hoarse.

But no help came.

'My darling Bud, there is only One who can help us,' he said, kneeling down by her again.

'Oh, Eddy dear!' gasped Violet, 'I feel so frightened! If He only *would* help us!' and she hid her face on his shoulder.

'The sea is His, and He made it,' said Edmund. 'He can save us from it, if it is His will. And if it is His will to take us now, isn't it a comfort to you that we should go together, my darling?'

'Yes,' said Violet. 'But oh, Eddy dear, I do love you so! I don't want you to be drowned!'

'Let us pray,' said Edmund, 'that it will please God to send us help, and that if it does not please Him to do it we may be ready for His will.'

Then Violet lay back on her pillows and put her hands together, and Edmund shut his eyes and said—

'O Thou who rulest the sea, look on us in our need, and save us, if it be Thy holy will; and if it pleases Thee that we should die, take away our fears, and send Thy holy angels to carry us safely to Thee.'

Then he gave Violet a long, long kiss, and she him, and her arms were round his neck a long while.

When they looked up again the water had come much nearer. Violet shuddered. There was still the cave behind them.

'I will carry you in there, dear Bud,' said Edmund, 'up to the furthest end. It may be that the tide does not come all the way in there.'

'Oh, do you think so!' asked Violet, with a ray of hope.

'I cannot tell until I have examined the inside,' said Edmund. 'I can soon find out.'

Then he lifted Violet gently, and laid her on the

little bit of beach, not more than a few feet, which still remained, and carried her chair into the cave, which had a large arched entrance, and was about the size of a small room. He placed the chair at the farther end, and as he did so saw too plainly by the wet sea-weeds on the rocky wall that the sea must fill the cave when the tide was in.

For one minute he threw himself down in an agony, burying his face in Violet's pillows. It was hard to die so young! and there were so many things—if he only had known, he would have done better. Bud, dear little, gentle, innocent Bud, was fit enough; but he—was he fit? One more earnest cry he poured forth from the bottom of his soul, that all the wrong things he had ever done might be forgiven, and that the loving arms of his Crucified Saviour might be open to him—even him.

He heard Baby Bud call, and sprang up. She was trembling violently.

'The wave came over my feet,' she moaned. 'Oh, Eddy dear!'

He caught her up in his arms, and carried her into the cave, laying her on her pillows again, and then taking off her shoes and socks, tenderly wiped her feet with his pocket-handkerchief, and wrapped them warmly up in the soft shawl.

'It doesn't matter much,' she said, trying to smile. 'It's only the beginning. Do you remember what I said a little while ago, about every day bringing us

nearer and nearer to God? Now it seems to me that every wave is bringing us nearer and nearer to God. I didn't think it would come so very quickly, though, Eddy!' and she clung again to him, as a great wave broke upon the entrance of the cave. It came rippling in a little way, then went back, returning again, not so far this time, and then again coming nearer; creeping, creeping on, sometimes seeming to take pity, and go away altogether, and then to come on faster and nearer than ever.

'The arms of JESUS will take you out of the water, darling,' said Edmund, 'and you will lie on His breast, for ever happy, after these few hard moments are past. Try and think of this, my own Bud, and don't cry so.'

'Let me come on your lap, Eddy dear,' sobbed Violet, 'that I may not see the water, and I will not cry any more.'

He sat up on the chair, so as to be out of reach of the waves as long as possible, and took Violet in his arms. She wound hers tightly round him, with her face hidden in his shoulder, and so they waited in silence. Violet's tears ceased, and she lay quite still with her eyes shut. Edmund could not close his; he felt as if he *must* watch the water, as it crept steadily on, nearer and nearer. It was almost up to the chair now.

Suddenly Violet started up. What was that! Was it a shout?

‘It is, it is!’ she exclaimed. ‘Oh Eddy dear, shout back again!’

Edmund did shout back again, with all his might. Again the call was repeated, and again Edmund answered, with fast beating heart.

‘It’s a boat! I saw the tip of it!’ cried Violet; and then in anguish, ‘Oh, Eddy, they’re looking for us, I’m sure, and they can’t see us! They will go away again!’

‘If you don’t mind being wetted, Bud,’ said Edmund, ‘I’ll carry you to the mouth of the cave. But the water must be pretty deep there; which will you do, stay here or come with me?’

‘With you, with you!’ said Violet. ‘Oh, do be quick!’

The boat was now in sight, at some distance in front of the cave; but those in the boat could not of course see Violet and Edmund at the back of the cave.

‘I see papa, and some strange people,’ said Violet, as Edmund waded through the water carefully, hoisting her up as high as he could. ‘They are looking all about here. Shout again, Eddy dear!’

Again the shout was answered, and now Edmund had reached the entrance of the cave. The water was up above his waist, and he could scarcely stand against the violence of the waves as they dashed into the cave. Violet was in the water up to her knees.

‘They see us!’ she cried. ‘They’re waving. Oh, how good God is!’

'It will be some minutes before they get to us,' said Edmund anxiously. 'I must seat you up on my shoulder, Bud—there!' He leaned for support against the rock at the side of the entrance.

The party in the boat were doing all they could to hasten to them. Higher and higher came the waves, nearly taking Edmund off his feet. Now the water was up to his neck, but still it must be some moments before the boat could possibly reach him. Edmund felt that another wave or two must carry him away. He looked up in despair. Just above his head, a little on one side, was a small ledge of rock sticking out. He made up his mind.

'Now Bud, be brave, and do as I tell you. I am going to put you up there. There is just room for you to sit firm. Sit there till they come, and keep your eyes on the boat. Don't look down at the water, it will make you giddy. Promise me, quick!'

'Yes, yes, I promise!' said Violet.

He gave her one kiss, and stretching up, placed her safely on the ledge.

'Now then! look at the boat!' cried Edmund. 'God bless you, darling!'

The next moment he lost his footing, and was carried away by the waves.



CHAPTER XIII.

SAVED.

VIOLET sat on the ledge, her eyes fixed on the boat, as Edmund had bid her. She did not stir; she was so afraid of falling. She never saw him disappear under the waves.

Three minutes more—they seemed long minutes to her—and the boat bumped against the cliff, close under her.

‘Eddy, they’re come!’ she cried, and then, looking round for the first time, saw no Edmund. She gave one scream, then her head swam, and she fell; her father caught her in his arms.

She knew nothing more until she opened her eyes in her own little bed at home, many hours after.

‘Eddy!’ was the first word she murmured.

Mamma was at her bedside in a moment.

‘What is it, darling?’ she asked.

‘Eddy!’ repeated Violet.

Her mother's eyes were full of tears. 'Not now, darling,' she said, kissing Violet fondly. 'The doctor says you must keep quite quiet.'

Baby Bud closed her eyes again. She did not sleep, however. She was thinking of Edmund, and trying to remember when she had last seen him, and where.

She lay silent for some time, and at last said, suddenly—

'Mamma dear, I have forgotten everything!'

'Have you, dear? Then don't trouble yourself. It will all come back by and bye.'

'I seem to do nothing but hear the sea,' said Violet. 'It *bizzes* in my ears, and *bizzes*, and I feel to be all floating about. I wish Eddy was here, that I might hold him tight! Where is he?'

'You must be a good little girl, and not talk,' said her mamma. 'It is bad for you, darling. You are weak.' And she went back to her seat in the window.

Then Violet lay still and quiet for a long time, thinking and thinking, and trying to puzzle out things she could not remember. And in the middle of this her eye fell on her mother, as she sat in the easy-chair in the window, and she thought she did not look as she generally looked, somehow. Her face was quite pale, and all round her eyes was red; she looked sad, and she sat there doing nothing, which

was not mamma's way at all, unless she was very tired. What was it? Violet lay wondering, but did not speak, until her mamma got up, and gave her some medicine.

As she stooped to kiss her afterwards, Violet said—

‘Mamma, darling, are you ill?’

‘No, my sweet,’ and the eyes filled with tears again.

‘Are you sad, dear mamma?’

‘Yes, darling, but be quiet now.’ And mamma went away, and nurse came to stay in the room.

Violet wanted to speak to nurse, but nurse put her finger on her lips, and drew down the blind. But before she did it, Violet saw that nurse had been crying too.

The day seemed very long to her. She lay trying to think of something that would not come.

At last it came. All in a moment she remembered about the cave, and the sea, and Edmund.

She started up with a scream—

‘Eddy! where is he? Eddy! Eddy!’

‘Hush! hush! my lamb!’ said nurse, coming up to the bed, and trying to soothe Violet. ‘My dear lamb! don’t ye, now, don’t!’ And she burst into tears that she could not keep back.

‘Tell me, dear nursie, do, and I will be good. Where is my Eddy?’

‘Safe in the arms of the LORD JESUS,’ said nurse, ‘for ever and ever. Happy, oh, so happy!’

her mother was very ill of late. Now now, darling, he said, meaning her badly. The mother says you must keep your mind.

Violet shut closed her eyes again. She did not sleep, however. She was thinking of Edmund, and trying to remember when she had last seen him, and where.

She lay silent for some time, and at last said, suddenly

'Mamma dear, I have forgotten everything!'

'Have you, dear? Then don't trouble yourself. It will all come back by and bye.'

'I seem to do nothing but hear the sea,' said Violet. 'It buzzes in my ears, and buzzes, and I feel to be all floating about. I wish Eddy was here, that I might hold him tight! Where is he?'

'You must be a good little girl, and not talk,' said her mamma. 'It is bad for you, darling. You are weak.' And she went back to her seat in the window.

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'Hush! hush! my lamb!' said nurse, coming up to the bed, and trying to soothe Violet. 'My dear lamb! don't ye, now, don't!' And she burst into tears that she could not keep back.

'Tell me, dear nurse, do, and I will be good.
 Where is my Eddy?'

'Safe in the arms of the Lord Jesus,' said nurse.
 'for ever and ever. Happy, oh, so happy!'

She broke down, sobbing.

'Oh nursie! my Eddy! my own Eddy! Let me die, and go to him!'

Violet was very ill after this. For some weeks she hung between life and death. All her cry was—

'Eddy! Eddy! my own Eddy!'

She got better slowly. Life seemed to her very sad without Eddy, who had been so much to her in every way. No one could brighten her up. She thought she never could be quite happy again, until the day came for her to die and go to him.

The day when she was, for the first time, carried out again into the garden, she lay sad and silent on the sofa. Nurse carried her there, for papa was in town, and mamma was ill in bed. The fatigue of nursing Violet, and sorrow for the loss of her dear boy, had broken her down at last.

'Cheer up, my darling,' said nurse, as she laid Violet down and put the shawl over her feet. 'There's Miss Alice going to read you a pretty story, like an angel as she is. She's coming out directly. Cheer up now, and do ye let your old nursie see a smile once more!'

The tears filled Violet's eyes.

'I can't help it, nursie,' she said wearily.

'For your dear mamma's sake you should try, my pet,' said nurse. 'Think of her sorrow, it is greater than yours. And how sweet and patient she

is. Try to be a comfort to her. *He* would have wished it. He was so unselfish always, the dear!’

‘I know, nursie, I know,’ said Violet. ‘I *will* try.’

‘That’s my own Miss Bud,’ said nurse. And she kissed the little pale wistful face, paler and more wistful than ever now.

Violet was left alone thinking. Had she been selfish in her grief for Edmund? It seemed hard to call it *that*. It was natural she should feel his loss very, very much. It made such a difference in her life. It was almost too bitter to think of sometimes. But was it bitter only to her? Was it not as great a sorrow, and greater, to her poor mamma and papa? She had been thinking only of herself. She had fancied that all the trouble was hers. And so, wrapped up in her own sorrow, she was growing selfish; yes, selfish; that very thing which she hated, which was so unlike her dear Eddy. She made up her mind that she would try to be more cheerful, and to be a comfort to her dear mamma, whose sadness was made more sad by the sight of Violet’s grief—she would begin to-day. It was what Eddy would have wished.

‘Dear, dear Eddy!’ she murmured, half aloud. ‘You were such a precious—! Why does not Alice come? She is a long time finding a story-book.’ As Violet thought this, she heard a step flying along the gravel path, and in another minute Alice,

pale and breathless, had seized both of Violet's hands.

'Bud! dear Bud!' she exclaimed, and then burst out crying.

'What is the matter?' asked Violet.

'Oh, Bud, I'm afraid you can't bear it! It's too joyful!' sobbed Alice.

'And you crying! What *do* you mean?' cried Violet. 'Tell me, tell me!'

'Eddy!' was all Alice could gasp out. 'He's alive, and—'

'Here,' said a loving voice, which Violet knew only too well; and in another minute she had fainted in Eddy's arms.

It was Eddy indeed. But how, and from where?

These were the questions which Baby Bud asked that evening as she lay with her tiny hand fast locked in Eddy's, looking like a *Rose* Bud now, instead of a 'White Violet.' Her face was beaming with happiness, as were all the bright faces round her. Mamma had become suddenly quite well—'with joy,' said Violet, and was down with them again.

'Well, it was very wonderful,' Eddy said. He had floated out to sea, and had been picked up insensible, by a small boat belonging to a merchant ship on her way to America. The captain had been very kind to him, but could not turn out of his course to put him on shore, as he had already been detained

long over his time. He promised to send Edmund home by another ship as soon as he reached New York. Edmund was very ill, however, and had a fever, which kept him in New York for two or three weeks. He had been insensible many days, and not able to write ; and the first day he was able to leave his bed he had embarked on board a ship for England, the good captain paying all his expenses.

And here he was again, at home among his dear ones. What words can tell their happiness ! How papa and mamma sat looking at their Edmund ! How the children crowded round him, eager to caress, and even touch him ! And how Baby Bud clung to him ! How *very* happy she was !

‘Bud, darling,’ whispered Edmund, as he carried her up to bed, ‘let us pray for each other that every day of our lives *may* bring us “nearer and nearer to God !”’



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